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Our daily homily

From a friend.

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OF
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Our Daily Homily

Volume V: Matthew—Revelation

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PREFACE

WITH the issue of this fifth volume of "OUR DAILY HOMILY," the top stone is placed on a structure which has occupied many of my brightest hours for more than three years.

Amid the pressure of a busy life, and the inevitable demands of a considerable church-organization, it has been an untold refreshment to turn to the devout study of successive chapters of the Bible, with the view of obtaining a message for oneself, and to pass on to others.

We must all have our "Temple of Peace"; and if this may not be a spacious and well-stocked library, it may at least be that collection of sacred literature which contains the noblest thoughts of the holiest men, inbreathed and borne along by the Spirit of God. Here is the secret of serenity, the treasure of tranquillity, the clue to perennial comfort.

It has been impossible altogether to exclude the personal element from these pages, because the sheets have been printed from the types of my own daily experience, set up by the many altering circumstances of joy and grief, conflict and peace, which befall each of us. But the one refrain has been the reality of the unseen; the nearness of God; the vindication of the Christian, as the only true policy of life; the duty and blessedness of doing all God commands, and bearing all He

permits ; the uplifting and light-bringing power of simple trust in Him who liveth, and was dead, and who is alive forevermore.

None of my books is dearer to me than this, or seems to contain more of my innermost thought ; but at best it is only a handful of meal in the barrel, which may God multiply till He send rain on the earth.

F. B. MEYER.

OUR DAILY HOMILY

It is He that shall save His people from their sins.

Matt. i. 21 (R. V.).

THIS is the mission of Immanuel. He came, not as the Jews expected, to break the yoke of Cæsar and reëstablish the kingdom of David; but to break the yoke of sin, and set up the sinless kingdom of God. The Church has too often misunderstood the object of His advent, as though He meant simply to save from the consequences and results of sin. This were too limited a programme for the Son of God. To cancel the results and leave the bitter cause; to deliver from the penalty, but not from the power; to rescue His people from the grasp of a broken law, but confess Himself unable to deal with the bad virus of the blood—this were to fail. No; dare to take this announcement in its full and glorious meaning, written as it is on the portico of our Saviour's life.

What an admixture of blood flowed through His veins! Let your eye glance through the list of His genealogy. Men and women, notorious for their evil character, lie in the direct line of His descent. This was permitted, that He might fully represent our fallen race; that no sinner, however bad, should be abashed to claim His help; and that it should be clearly shown how powerless sin was to tarnish or taint the holiness of His sinless nature. Made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He knew no sin. The germs of corruption could find no welcome in His heart.

Art thou one of His people? Hast thou accepted His rule, and allied thyself with Him? For if so, He shall save thee. Though possessed with seven devils, He will drive them out.

They offered unto Him gifts, Gold. . . .

Matt. ii. 11 (marg.).

GOLD is for the king. It is meet that Matthew should tell this story: for his is preëminently the royal Gospel. Long before the Lord was born, these Eastern sages must have been started on their way, whither and to worship whom they knew not: but an ancient prophecy had foretold that to this babe should be offered of the gold of Sheba, and that kings should bring Him the riches of the Gentiles.

How useful this gold was to Joseph in the following months! It helped him to defray the cost of the journey into Egypt and back, and to maintain his precious charges there. The Heavenly Father knew what those needs would be, and met them by anticipation. If you concern yourself in the affairs of His kingdom, and will obey the warnings and directions He gives; if you dare to step out on the path of literal obedience—you will find that God will become responsible and defray all costs. Gold is naught to Him. He can make it out of common dust by a word.

It is sweet to think of all the gold presented to Jesus in after ages. The wealth of the rich, the golden ornaments taken from the person, the tiny pieces of gold which represent the patient savings of the poor—all these have made up the flowing river of which those golden gifts of the Magi were the first trickling drops. Have you given gold to Him, you who know Him, not as the babe only, but as the Man of the Cross; not as man merely, but as the Son of the Highest? You may have given Him copper in abundance, and silver in handfuls; but let your future gifts to Him be of the best. Or, if poverty restrains you, let the philosopher's stone of Love turn the meaner metals to gold.

In those days cometh John the Baptist.

Matt. iii. 1.

THE Evangelist is fond of the present tense, "cometh." Yes, these records are true to all time. You tell me that they happened nineteen centuries ago. Certainly; but they happened yesterday, and are happening to-day. Remember that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He was, and is, and is to come. Christ was born into the world, but He is always being born into the hearts of men in Regeneration. John preceded and announced His advent in the wilderness of Judæa; and He is always preparing His way into the hearts and lives of men. It is doubtful whether Jesus ever comes into the heart of mature manhood without the previous work of a John the Baptist. Of days of conviction of sin, of remorse, of repentance, we may truly say, "In those days cometh John the Baptist."

John the Baptist is sadly needed to-day. Much of what we call Christianity is but christianized heathenism. It glozes over covetousness, luxurious self-indulgence, compliance with fashion and worldliness; it admits into its high places men who thrive on the oppression of the poor; it condones the oppression of the native races, the sale of opium and spirits, the shameless traffic in impurity; it rears the ideals of the world in the place of the changeless cross of the slain Christ with its divine sorrow and blood. Ah, we need that John the Baptist should come with his stern words about the axe, the winnowing-fan, and the fire. Nothing less will avail to prepare the way for a new coming of Christ.

Each age has had its John the Baptist. Now St. Bernard; now Savonarola; now John Knox. With sonorous, ringing voice the herald has prepared the way of the King: "He cometh to judge the world!"

Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Matt. iv. 1.

YESTERDAY, the open heavens ; to-day, the burning cinders of the wilderness of temptation. Then the voice of the Father owning Him as the Well-beloved ; now the hiss of the tempter. Then the teeming crowds ; now the desert solitude and silence, broken only by the cry of the wild beast. Then the Spirit as a nesting dove, but now as a compelling force. Wherever there is the Christ-life, it passes through these same experiences. The Holy Spirit often anticipates coming trial by granting some great revelation of God ; but He who gives the one leads into the other, that the precious bestowments of God's grace may be rendered permanent.

Would you give the bread of life to thousands ? You must refuse to use your opportunity to make bread for your own gratification. You cannot use your power for others and for yourself. If you elect to use it for them, you must be content to wait till the Father sends His angels to minister to you. In the meanwhile live by faith on His words.

Would you teach the magnificence of a faith that can trust God to preserve it, though it steps from the mountain brow on to thin air ? You must refuse to use it for purposes of ostentation ; and wait till God, not Satan, calls.

Would you win the kingdoms of the world ? You must obtain them, not by methods which commend themselves to human prudence, but through the death of the cross and the falling into the ground to die. There are two mountains in the Gospel : this, as it opens ; that of the Ascension at its close. The valley of death lies between. But the traversing of this valley was necessary, ere Christ could say, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven.

Matt. v. 45 (R. V.).

WE are made sons by regeneration, through faith in *the* Son; but we are called to make our calling and election sure—to approve and vindicate our right to that sacred name. We can only do this by showing in word and act that the Divine life and principles animate us.

Jesus teaches that the life of God in the hearts of His children will show itself in pure and unaffected love. He says in effect, “God is good: God forgives: God bears with wrong and sin: God loves those who hate Him, blesses those who curse, bestows His favors on the false and unjust, suffers long and is kind; believes, hopes, bears all things. Therefore, if you are His children, do as He does, as I do: follow Me: live as I live: become as a bird, a lily, a little child: be pure, merciful, lowly, gentle, strong in righteousness—and you will be called the sons of God; yours will be the kingdom of heaven.”

There were several things the Lord could not say fully in this opening statement. That obedience to His precepts would inevitably conduct them to a cross; that the strength for such a life could only be secured through the coming of the Comforter; that the progress of the Kingdom would be slow and arduous—these things were for the time veiled and hidden. But His main object was to teach that Christianity must be a life after the model of God's. Christian disciple, art thou living this life? Not by a creed, a ritual, a profession; but by living the life, is thy true nature discerned, whether thou art wheat or tare, child or hypocrite. Sometimes we are called to be as the sun, ripening souls by our genial love; at other times we refresh them as rain watering the grass.

Thy Father which is in secret, . . . which seeth in secret.
Matt. vi. 18.

HOW fondly Jesus repeats these words (vers. 4, 6, 18). Though compelled to live so much in the public gaze of men, His heart was always sighing for the secret place of fellowship with His Father, who waited for Him there.

Of course, the main object of these paragraphs was to withdraw His disciples from the excessive outwardness of the age in which He spoke, and which necessarily detracted from the singleness, directness, and simplicity of the religious life. It is impossible to perform our religious duties before men, without insensibly considering what impression we are producing, and how far their estimation of us is being enhanced. And in so far as we seek these things, the stream is contaminated with mud and silt, and becomes turbid. We have just as much religious life as we show to God in secret—just that, no less, no more. Whatever is not wrought between thee and God, with no record but His eye, is chaff which the wind driveth away.

Here is a test for our alms, our prayers, and our fasting from sin and self-indulgence. If we do any of these to maintain or increase the consideration that men have of us, they count for nothing in the eye of God. But whatever is done for Him alone will secure His inevitable notice and reward. Dwell on that very definite assurance: "*Shall* recompense thee." There is no doubt about it. For every petition breathed into His ear; for every sigh and tear; for every abstinence from sin and self—there will be a certain recompense, after the Divine measure. Such seeds shall have a prolific harvest. Seek then the secret place, where prying eyes cannot follow, and curious ears cannot overhear.

With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you.

Matt. vii. 2.

THIS is an invariable principle. Christ did not make it true by saying it ; He said it because it was true. There are at least three policies of life—that of the churl, who never gives unless he is compelled ; of the niggard, who metes out from the tiniest measure on which he can lay hands ; of the bountiful man, who is ever meting out his stores with lavish hand. If he gives, it is to his uttermost ; if he loves, it is with all his heart ; if he forgives, he crowns the forgiven one with loving kindness ; if he puts his hand to constructing aught, every part of it bears trace of the wealth of his taste, and gift, and self-sacrifice.

It might be supposed that such a policy would lead to bankruptcy of resources and speedy impoverishment ; and for fear of this most refrain from adopting it. They either do not give, or give stintingly and fearfully. But the remarkable fact is, that when a man is using this large measure toward others, they catch it up and fill it with their bountifulness toward him. They mete out their love and gifts according to the measure of his giving. This is an invariable principle : begin serving men with a miser's hand, and they will do the same to you ; begin, on the contrary, by serving men without stint, and they will do the same to you.

Live a royal life, child of God, as becomes such a Father. Give, expecting nothing again, with full measure, pressed down, and running over. Give, not so much money, as love, and tenderness, and human sympathy : give as one who is always receiving from the boundless resources of God. And, provided always that thy motives are pure, it will come back to thee. God will see thee bountifully rewarded.

A man under authority, having soldiers under me.
Matt. viii. 9.

THE centurion's faith set Christ marvelling. *First*, because it was found in such an unlikely place. Here was a Gentile who had come from the West, and was sitting down with Abraham in the Kingdom of God. *Secondly*, because of its greatness: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

This Roman officer applied to our Lord principles with which he was cognizant through his connection with the army. He knew that he had no power over other men in his individual capacity, or apart from his organic connection with the machinery of government. If he said to one man Come; to another Go; to his servant Do this, and his command was immediately obeyed—it was entirely due to his own obedience, in turn, to the authority which was over himself. So long as he obeyed that authority, he represented it; and it passed through him to compel obedience to his commands. This is the principle he applied to our Lord.

He recognized that Jesus of Nazareth was always acting under the authority of His Heavenly Father, and he inferred, therefore, that He could wield the power of God as he could that of Rome. As the authority of the Cæsars flowed through his own yielded life, so the authority of God over diseases, demons, and all else, would flow through Christ's.

What a profound principle is here! Learn to obey, and you shall rule. Yield yourself absolutely to God, and God's power shall pass through your heart and life. Be under Divine authority, and you shall be able to say, Go, come, do this. All things serve the man who serves Jesus Christ. Absolute consecration to God, as a soldier is surrendered to his country, is the condition of power.

Thy faith hath made thee whole.

Matt. ix. 22.

WHOLENESS and holiness are identical : the one of the body ; the other of the soul. They are closely related to the word *Health*, and all may be procured through faith. Holiness, wholeness of heart, health—and all by faith. There are three steps to this blessed state—of wholeness of soul.

First, we must believe that it is attainable. For we never feel morally bound to do, attempt, or choose, what we do not believe to be within our reach. But all questions on the matter are settled forevermore by such words as, “ Be ye holy, for I am holy ” ; and “ Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind.”

Second, we must consecrate ourselves to God. In other words, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we must determine and resolve that we will be wholly the Lord's. We must come to a fixed resolve to break off from every known sin ; to walk, so far as we know them, in the way of God's commandments ; to be and do and suffer all His righteous will. This must be our deliberate resolve for all coming time ; and if we are unable to make the resolve, through the frailty of our nature and the strength of our old sins, we must at least tell God that we are willing for this to become our unvacillating attitude.

Third, we must believe, absolutely, that God does accept the consecration we have made, and will do all that He has promised, by infilling us with His Holy Spirit, and working in us that which is pleasing in His sight. Nay, we must not only believe that He will do it, we must ask and claim that He should do it ; we must, like this woman, touch Christ and obtain His healing virtue.

What I tell you in the darkness, speak ye in the light.

Matt. x. 27.

THESE striking words are applicable to us all. Our Lord is constantly taking us into the dark, that He may tell us things. Into the dark of the shadowed home, where bereavement has drawn down the blinds; into the dark of the lonely, desolate life, where some infirmity closes us in from the light and stir of life; into the dark of some crushing sorrow and disappointment. Then He tells us His secrets, great and wonderful, eternal and infinite. The eye, which has become dazzled by the glare of earth, becomes able to behold the heavenly constellations; and the ear to detect the undertones of His voice, which is often drowned amid the tumult of earth's strident cries.

But such revelations always imply a corresponding responsibility—that *speak ye* in the light—that *proclaim* upon the house-tops. We are not meant to linger always in the dark, or stay in the closet; presently we shall be summoned to take our place in the rush and storm of life; and when that moment comes, we are to speak and proclaim what we have learned.

This gives a new meaning to suffering, the saddest element in which is often its apparent aimlessness. "How useless I am." "What am I doing for the betterment of men?" "Wherefore this waste of the precious spikenard of my soul." Such are the desperate laments of the sufferer. But God has a purpose in it all. He has withdrawn His child to the higher altitudes of fellowship, that he may hear God speaking face to face, and bear the message to his fellows at the mountain foot. Were the forty days wasted that Moses spent on the Mount, or the period spent at Horeb by Elijah, or the years spent in Arabia by Paul?

Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.
Matt. xi. 6.

A FRIEND has turned these words into another beatitude—*The blessedness of the unoffended.* The Baptist was tempted to take offence with Christ, first, because of His long delay in asserting Himself as the promised Messiah; and secondly, because of His apparent indifference to His own welfare. “If He be all that I expected, why does He leave me in this sad plight, extending to me no word of comfort; making no attempt to free me from these dark, damp cells.”

Are there not such hours in our lives still? We say, If He really love us and is entrusted with all power, why does He not deliver us from this difficult and irksome condition? Why does He not hurl these prison walls to the ground? Why does He not vindicate and bring me out to the light of life and joy?

But the Lord made no attempt to emancipate His servant; and He seems to be unmindful of our sore straits. All He did for John was to send him materials on which his faith should feed, and rise to a stronger, nobler growth. “Go back,” He said in effect to John, “tell him what I can do; he is not mistaken—I have all power, I am the expected King; and if I do not come to his help in the way he expects, it is not through lack of power and willingness, but because of reasons of Divine policy and government, to which I must be true. Tell him to trust Me, though I do not deliver him. Assure him of the blessedness which must accrue to those who are not offended at My apparent neglect. I will explain all to him some day.” Thus He speaks still. He does not attempt to apologize, or to explain—He only asks our trust; and promises blessedness to those who do not stumble at life’s mysteries.

Have ye not read in the law? . . . If ye had known what this meaneth. . . . Matt. xii. 5, 7.

THE Pharisees were great sticklers for rites and ceremonies. Their religion consisted in little else than a perpetual round of outward observances. They believed that they were thus observing and maintaining the ancient Mosaic code. In their judgment, great human necessities, like hunger, must be subordinate to their minute exactions. Our Lord, on the other hand, claimed that the laws of God, as written in the nature of man, must have a priority over merely ceremonial enactments. And He showed that His contention was supported by those Scriptures on which they rested their case.

There are two ways of studying Scripture. The one deals with its letter; the other compares Scripture with Scripture, and seeks to fathom its profound and eternal meaning. Do not read as the scribe, but as the Son of Man. Do not rest in the outward rite, but in the spiritual attitude of which the rite was intended to be the expression. Everywhere there is One greater than the Temple; greater than the rigorous exactions of the Jewish Sabbath; greater than the code on which Pharisaism insisted.

All through the Old Testament you may detect the spirit of the New; the mercy in which God delights, the pitiful appreciation of the frailty and hunger of the nature He has made. The New Testament is in accord with the Old of Scripture, and the older Testament of man's nature, as God made it at first.

It is highly important to remember this. The God who *redeems* is He who *created* all things by His word, and for His pleasure. Is it likely that He will contradict His original design, and undo what cost Him thought and care? Surely not; He is pledged only to undo the evil which has marred His work.

Unto you it is given to know.

Matt. xiii. 11.

IN explanation of this statement, our Lord reiterates His favorite saying: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance." His disciples had already given heed to His words. On the thin soil of their hearts the precious seed had already begun to germinate: and as it throve, it prepared the way for more and more to follow.

In the case of the crowds that pressed around Him, however, there was no such earnest giving heed. They were content with the interest, the beauty and grace, of His nature-teaching, without a thought of its deeper aspects. Hearing, they did not understand; seeing, they did not perceive; face to face with Incarnate Truth, they thought only that He had a pleasant voice, and could play skillfully on the harp.

First, *Understand what you hear.* Do not be content to have a merely intellectual appreciation of its force or beauty; but open your heart to meditate and ponder it. It is only thus that truth really strikes its roots into the soul, and defies the birds.

Second, *Beware of the response of mere emotion.* Too many of these receive the word with joy. Their expressions of interest and pleasure are loud and emphatic. Tears course down their cheeks. You think them most hopeful. But it passes like the sunshine and cloud of an April day.

Third, *Guard against cares and worldly success.* The first, of the poor; the second, of the rich. There is not room in the heart, or nutrition in the soul, for the absorbing pursuit of both earth and heaven, of time and eternity.

Fourth, *Practice what you hear.* Remember that not the hearers of the word, but the doers of the work, are *blessed*.

Looking up to heaven, He blessed, and brake, and gave.

Matt. xiv. 19.

STONEWALL JACKSON was once asked what he meant when he used the expression, "Instant in prayer." "I will give you," he said, "my idea of it for illustration, if you will allow it, and not think that I am setting myself up as a model for others." On being assured that there would be no misjudgment, he went on to say: "I have so fixed the habit in my own mind, that I never raise a glass of water to my lips without a moment's asking of God's blessing. I never seal a letter without putting a word of prayer under the seal. I never take a letter from the post without a brief sending of my thoughts heavenward. I never change my classes in the section room without a minute's petition on the cadets who go out and those who come in." "And don't you sometimes forget this?" "I think I can say that I scarcely do; the habit has become almost as fixed as breathing."

And if this was the habit of the servant, how much more of the Master. Frequently, in the Gospels, we are told of His heavenward look. It was as though He were always looking up for His Father's smile, direction, and benediction; so that He could be assured that what He was engaged in was in the line of His Father's purpose, and that He might gain the needed power to act and wisdom to speak.

It is only thus that we shall be able to meet the hunger of our times. Our slender stores will not avail for so great a multitude. But if we bring them to Him, and place them in His hands, and look up to heaven for His enablement, we shall break and break again till all have sufficed and left. But this habit can only be maintained by those who go into the mountain of prolonged fellowship.

Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt.

Matt. xv. 28 (R. v.).

THIS was a remarkable permission. It is not often that Christ takes the key to His stores out of the bunch which hangs at His girdle, and entrusts it to a soul, saying in effect, Take what you will. "Of the work of My hands, command ye Me."

1. *We must intercede for others.*—This woman came for her child. We must always be on our guard when we ask much for self, lest somehow our requests be prompted by self-aggrandizement. If we do ask for power, wisdom, or likeness to Christ, let it be that we may help others better. The apostle says that Christ "loosed us from our sins . . . and made us priests" (Rev. i. 5, 6, R. v.). We all need this loosing, that we may become intercessors.

2. *We must accord Christ His right place.*—The Canaanitish woman came to Him as the Son of David, and He answered her not a word. She had no claim on Him as such. That He was the Jews' Messiah could not help her. She had given Him that title by courtesy and hearsay. It was necessary that by His silence she should be driven to find Him for herself. When she gave Him a universal title, and said, Lord, help me ! worshipping at His feet, she was a step nearer the goal.

3. *We must answer His affirmations with Yea.*—He told her what she was. She was an alien and outcast. She was not part of the chosen family ; she must understand her true position, and take it. And she did. She said, Yea, Lord. If you can perfectly accept God's will, so that it shall take the place of your own ; if you will take your place among the dogs beneath the table, you are sure to obtain answers to your prayers—God can let you have your way, because it will be His.

Have mercy on Thee, Lord ! this shall never be unto Thee. Matt. xvi. 22 (R. V., marg.).

THROUGHOUT His life these words were perpetually flung at the heart of Christ. Spare Thyself this hunger, the devil said in the wilderness, on the threshold of His public ministry ; spare Thyself this agonizing death, he said again in the garden, on the eve of the crucifixion.

It is noticeable that the cross was surrounded by voices that repeated the same words. *They that passed by it* wagged their heads, and said "Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself." *The chief priests* mocked Him, with the scribes and elders, and said, "Can He not save Himself?" *The soldiers* also mocked Him, coming to Him, offering Him vinegar, and saying, "If Thou art the King of the Jews, save Thyself." And one of *the malefactors* which were hanged railed on Him, saying, "Art not Thou the Christ? save Thyself and us." All these voices spoke after the methods of human wisdom.

This made our Lord turn so quickly on Peter, saying, "Get thee behind Me, Satan : thou art a stumbling-block unto Me." How often are the same words addressed to us : "Pity thyself. Have mercy on your sensitive human nature ; do not be too lavish with your money ; give yourself a little more license." But it cannot be. You cannot save others and yourself as well. Those that would follow Jesus in His steps of redemptive help to mankind must deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Him into rejection, shame, spitting, and the grave. They who have mercy on themselves will never show much to others, or receive much ; but the merciful are blessed, because they obtain mercy. Thus mercy is "twice blessed ; it blesses him that gives, and him that takes."

Behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.

Matt. xvii. 3.

LUKE tells us that they "spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Moses, as representing the Law, would remind Him that if as God's Lamb He must die, yet as God's Lamb He would redeem countless myriads. Elijah, as representative of the prophets, would dwell on the glory that would accrue to the Father. These thoughts were familiar enough to the mind of our blessed Master; yet they must have gladdened and strengthened Him, as they fell from other lips: the more so when they conversed together on the certain splendor of the resurrection morning that should follow His decease.

And where could there have been found greater subjects than this wondrous death, and His glorious resurrection? Here the attributes of God find their most complete and most harmonious exemplification. Here the problems of human sin and salvation are met and solved. Here the travail of Creation meets with its answer and key. Here are sown the seeds of the new heavens and earth, in which shall dwell righteousness and peace. Here is the point of unity between all ages, all dispensations, all beings, all worlds. Here blend men and angels; departed spirits and the denizens of other spheres; Peter, James, and John, with Moses and Elijah, and all with the great God Himself, whose voice is heard falling in benediction from the opened heaven.

We, too, must often climb the mount of transfiguration in holy reverie; for the nearer we get to the Cross, and the more we meditate upon the decease accomplished at Jerusalem, the closer we shall come into the centre of things; the deeper will be our harmony with ourselves and all other noble spirits and with God Himself.

Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone.

Matt. xviii. 15.

“WHERE is thy brother, child?”

“I do not know, Lord; I have not seen or spoken to him these many days; and, as far as I am concerned, I would not mind if I never saw him again; he is as good as lost to me.”

“Hast thou wronged him, that this gulf has yawned between you? Remember that I said, if on coming to the altar, thou shouldest remember that thy brother hath some complaint against thee, thou wert to leave thy gift, and seek to be reconciled; then return to offer thy gift.”

“Yes, Lord, I remember well. But that is not the case now; my brother has nothing against me; he is in the wrong, not I; he has trespassed against me, not I against him. It is therefore for him to come to me, not for me to go to him.”

“Is it likely that he will come to thee?”

“I do not think it is, Lord. He is not one of Thy disciples; and it is most unlikely that he will ever cross my threshold to apologize and ask forgiveness.”

“Then thou must go to him, and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, and do thy best to win him back.”

“But I think he is most likely to put the wrong construction on my going, and to account that I feel myself in the wrong.”

“Thou art thy brother’s keeper, and thou must win him out of his fault, and lovelessness, and wandering. He is drifting away—not from thee only, but from Me. I know he was in the wrong at first; but thou art in the wrong now, and thou must go and tell him his fault, and try to wash his feet and win him back.”

Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you. . . . Matt. xix. 8.

THIS is a very profound principle, which is of immense value in dealing with Scripture. There were certain precepts and commands given to Israel, which are not of lasting obligation, because they were stages in their moral discipline and education. It would have been impossible to lift them suddenly from the degradation into which they had sunk in Egypt, to the glorious levels of Isaiah or the Sermon on the Mount: so God's dealings with them were graduated and progressive.

Such were the regulations about a plurality of wives, the keeping of bond-slaves, the treatment of captives, the destruction of their foes. With respect to these, our Lord says, Moses interposed a parenthesis of legislation, which was a stage higher than anything known among the surrounding nations, though it was not God's normal or original code.

What was true of Israel is true of us. We do not realize, in the first stage of our redemption, all that is included in the word "Sin." We are like men enveloped in morning mist, which permits them to descry only the bolder outlines of the cliffs around them, but as yet veils the minuter eminences or depressions. As the mist clears, surrounding objects become ever more distinctly defined: so that we know more of God, we know ourselves better, and realize what sin is, and come to see it where we had never guessed its presence. Thus we condemn to-day what we permitted five years ago. It is interesting to find in these words of Christ the germ of an argument which His apostle used afterward in the Epistle to the Galatians with such marvellous force. He said the Mosaic dispensation was a parenthesis; but it cannot disannul God's primal institution (Gal. iii. 15-17).

THIS is the cry of youth—ardent, impulsive, self-confident. It does not wait to calculate the ridges and hummocks that lie between it and its goal, but supposes that it will be able to skate the entire distance over the glistening azure-blue ice. Without hesitation it counts on being able to brave all difficulty, surmount all hardship, drink the cup, and be baptized with the baptism.

But these men slept in Gethsemane, forsook the Master when He was arrested, and one of them at least failed Him at the cross. Creature-might cannot carry us in the hour of our greatest peril. We can vaunt ourselves as we may; but we have to learn that we can only follow Christ in His cup and baptism, after we have been endued with the Spirit of Pentecost. I once knew two who said these words to God, when He presented them with the cup of suffering and death. They did not know all it involved; and they confessed afterward that they could never have stood to their choice, had they not been graciously and repeatedly enabled. But at the end they could not wish it to have been otherwise.

How different were the experiences of these two men! To one the cup and baptism came swiftly, when he fell beneath the beheading axe of Herod (Acts xii. 2); to the other they came in long, long years of sharing in the patience of Jesus Christ. These are different aspects of the same fellowship of suffering—swift death, or long waiting; but in both nearness to Jesus. We have no right to cherish the assurance of sitting right and left of the throne, if that only means our own power, authority, glory. But if it means nearness to Jesus, we may count on it with the utmost assurance.

All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Matt. xxi. 22.

THIS was a very remarkable answer ; showing that the Lord, in His human life, was the Author and Finisher of the life of faith. He did not quote His Divine power and Godhead as the cause of the withering of the fig-tree ; but proceeded to give a lesson on faith, as much as to say that He had wrought the miracle by faith in His Father, and that they could do as He had done, if only they had a similar faith.

Where we get wrong in prayer is that we are so self-willed. We *set* ourselves to pray for things ; we vow to sit up all night to bring God round to our way of thinking ; we use strong cryings, tears, and protestations ; we endeavor to work ourselves into a frame of faith ; we think we believe ; we shut the doors of our heart against the tiniest suggestion or suspicion that we do not believe. And then we are surprised if the fig-tree does not wither, or the mountain remove.

Where are we wrong ? It is not hard to see. There is too much of self and the energy of the flesh in all this. We can only believe for a thing when we are in such union with God that His thought and purpose can freely flow into us, suggesting what we should pray for, and leading us to that point in which there is a perfect sympathy and understanding between us and the Divine mind. Faith is always the product of such a frame as this. Be sure that you are on the line of God's purpose. Wait for Him till the impulses of nature have subsided, and the soul is hushed and still. Then the Spirit will lead you to ask what is in the will of God to give, and you will know instantly that the Spirit intercedes within you according to the will of God.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . with all thy mind.
Matt. xxii. 37.

THIS was Adam's blessed privilege in Eden ; but he missed it. The love of self took the place of the love of God. It is the aim of our blessed Lord to bring us back to that position. Perfect love is the sunlit peak to which His whole redemption tends. And perfect love would be perfect holiness. If a man were to love God and his neighbor as his first and chief and all-absorbing passion, there would be no room for sin to establish itself in his heart.

But does not this command seem altogether impracticable? It does ; and it is impracticable to our mortal flesh. It is high ; we cannot attain to it. Yet the very sublimity of the demand is intended to drive us to the Holy Ghost. He sheds abroad the love of God in hearts which are fully yielded to Him. If you desire that this love should be your privilege, lie down low before the flow of the River of Life, and it will fill every gully and inlet of your nature.

But, perhaps you are not of an emotional nature ; you cannot gleam and flash, and shed tears, and light up with smiles. You cannot love God with your *heart* ! Then see, the Lord says that you can love Him with your *mind*, *i. e.*, with your intellect, your choice, your will. Probably this is where you have to begin. Give your mind, your will, your power of choice to God. Make Him first. Ask Him to take the helm of your life, and to control, inspire, and direct its every movement. Crown Him King. And when the will, which is the high priest of your nature, has put its crown of life on the head of Christ, who is God Incarnate, all the emotions and affections and faculties of heart and life will come in to swell the court with their homage and acclaim.

How often would I have gathered thy children together ?

Matt. xxiii. 37.

ONLY the greatest artists can make immortal pictures from simple domestic scenes. To detect the imperishable and the infinite in the common and ordinary, and to preserve it in such a form as to arrest the ages, this is the mark of consummate power. But how characteristic of Jesus—a broken bottleskin, a patched garment, a handful of girls shut out of a village feast—these are the subjects which He painted into never-to-be-forgotten pictures. Lord, give us childlike hearts that we may see the secrets that are hidden in common things !

But how this image arrests us ! Who has not heard the cluck of the hen when danger was threatening her brood ? She is quicker to detect its proximity than her callow young ; and she must needs insert herself between it and them. Ah, how often does the rush of life drown the call of Jesus to come under His wing for rest and safety !

Bunyan says that the hen has a variety of calls, some six or eight. Jesus also calls us for different purposes—sometimes to nestle near His heart for fellowship ; sometimes for rest. Sometimes He calls us to feast on some rich dainty, to which He has directed us in the Word ; and sometimes to hide in the shadow of His wings till dreaded evils pass us by.

Oh that we more often heard and obeyed that warning note ! Probably there is never a temptation nor trial which is not thus anticipated and preceded. When passion overcomes you by a sudden rush, you must not impute your failure to any lapse in your Saviour's care. He called you, but you could not hear. "How often !" Who can enumerate the many, many times when we have been summoned by Jesus nearer to Himself, but would not ?

The summer is nigh.

Matt. xxiv. 32.

YOU say that it is rather overdue. The nipping winds and morning frosts have held back vegetation so long that it has seemed as if summer would never visit us, spreading her carpet on the earth, and giving her intense hues to stream and lake and sky. But summer is nigh in spite of all prognostications to the contrary, because He is nigh, who is the King of summer, whose presence makes summer. Be sure that He, and therefore *it*, is nigh, even at the doors.

He is always nigh, and those that love Him realize the perpetual summer of His presence; but His appearing, the *parousia*, is nigh. Presently the swing doors will be flung wide, and His triumphal procession will sweep into our view. Then the millennial summer of the world will break, and her long winter will be gone forever. Then the bride will hear Him say: "The winter is over and gone; the time of the singing of birds is come: arise, my fair one, and come."

The rumors of war that frighten the nations; the slackening faith and waning love; the dissemination of the Gospel to all lands; the great movement now in progress in the midst of the ancient people of God; the decrease of conversion work in favor of the preparation of the Bride for the Bridegroom—all these are like the tender shoots of the fig-tree which show that the Lord is at hand. Oh, lonely and sequestered ones, by His appearing, and by our gathering together unto Him, be of good courage, and do the King's work.

Do you want perpetual summer in your soul? There is only one condition which needs to be fulfilled. You must leave the northern climes to dwell between the Tropics, where the sun is always on the throne of the sky. Thy sun shall no more go down.

He also that had received the one talent came.

Matt. xxv. 24 (R. V.).

IT is remarkable that the man who had *one* talent should hide it. If we had been told that he who had five had hidden one we should not have been surprised; but for the man who had only one to hide it!—this is startling; but it is true to life.

The people whose talents and opportunities are very slight and slender are they who are tempted to do nothing at all. “I can do so very little; it will not make much difference if I do nothing: I shall not be missed; my tiny push is not needed to turn the scale.” That is the way they talk. They forget that an ounce-weight may turn the scales where hundred-weights are balanced. They do not realize that the last flake of white snow just oversets the gathering avalanche, and sends it into the vales beneath.

Are you one of these slenderly-endowed ones? And are you doing all you can? Are you doing anything? Even though you cannot do much in your isolation, you might join with others and do much. You might invest your little all in the bank of the Church, and trade as part of that heavenly corporation. Oh, disinter your one talent! Be sure you have one; ask the Master where and what it is; place yourself at His disposal. If it is only to carry refreshment to the harvesters—do that. Be thou faithful in thy very little.

We need not wait for the great future, to obtain this multiplication or withdrawal of our talents. They are already waxing or waning in our hands. There are many among us who, as life has progressed, have come into the use of powers of which at first they were perfectly ignorant; whilst others are losing, through misuse, the little they had.

My blood of the covenant.

Matt. xxvi. 28 (R. V.).

THE first covenant was not ratified without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses, he took the blood of the calves and goats, sprinkled the people, and said, This is the blood of the covenant (Heb. ix. 19, 20). So the second covenant must be ratified by blood; not by that of calves and goats, but by the precious blood of Jesus Himself. He who made the covenant sealed it with His blood, that we might have strong assurance.

But Christ has put the cup which holds the emblem of His blood into our hands, and bids us drink it. What, then, do we mean when at the Supper we lift that sacred cup to our lips? Are we not saying by that significant act, Remember thy covenant? Are we not reminding Jesus that we are relying upon Him to do His part? Are we not pledging ourselves to Him as His own, bound to Him by indissoluble ties, and satisfied with His most blessed service?

Among the most precious promises of the new covenant is that in which God promises to remember our sins no more. Here is the ground which enables God to forgive so freely. The blood has been shed for many unto the remission of sins; the claims of infinite justice have been met; the righteous demands of a broken law satisfied; the barriers have been removed that might have restrained the *manifestation* of Divine love, though they could not obstruct the love. And now we may sit with Christ at His table in His kingdom, not rebels, but welcome guests.

Also among the promises of the new covenant is that in which God promises that we shall be His people, and He our God. This item also is presented by us in humble expectancy, whilst, in expectant faith, we say, Do as Thou hast said.

Him they compelled to go with them, that he might bear His cross.

Matt. xxvii. 32 (R. V.).

IF we may judge from the familiar way in which Mark speaks of the sons of this Cyrenian, who the soldiers brutally compelled to carry our Saviour's cross, we should infer that from this hour he became a Christian. He had little suspected such a thing in the early morning, when he left his lodging to attend to his business ; but, being constrained to go to Calvary, he lingered there of his own accord through those anxious hours, and was led to feel that such a sufferer, to whom even Nature paid such homage, was worthy henceforth to receive his loyalty.

But how many of us are carrying our cross because we are compelled ! There seems no alternative but to carry the dead weight of our cross with us everywhere, only wishing a hundred times each day that we might have respite. Dear soul, that cross is yet going to be the greatest blessing of your life if it lead you to the Crucified, and you find in Him what will transform it into the ladder which links earth with heaven, swaying beneath angel tread.

If Simon became a Christian, with what rapture must he have reviewed that incident in his life ! How easy it would have been to carry the cross had he known Jesus as he came to know Him afterward ! He would have needed no compelling ! So if you saw the will of Jesus in your cross, and that you were carrying it with Him, how much easier it would be ! But that is so. He is in it. Bear it with Him ; out of the cross will fall a shower of flowers.

There is no such thing as chance in our lives. It might have seemed such that Simon was coming into Jerusalem at that moment. It was shown, however, to be part of the Eternal counsel. Dare to believe in the Divine purpose which orders your cross.

*The angel answered and said unto the women,
fear not ye !* *Matt. xxviii. 5.*

THE emphasis is on the pronoun *ye*. The angel meant, As for these sentinels that are quaking in dread and becoming as dead men, it is meet and natural that they should do so. They are strangers to Him whom ye seek, and are set here to do the work of His foes. But there is no need for those that seek Jesus to fear.

Are you seeking the forgiveness of your sins through His blood ? Fear not ye ! Do not fear that they are too many to be forgiven. Do not fear that you have not the right faith. Do not fear that you will find His door shut. Do not fear that He will always be reminding you of what you have cost Him. Do not fear that He will let you drift from Him again. Ye seek the Lord who was crucified. Fear not !

Are you seeking a closer identification with His death ? Fear not ! There is no possibility of realizing the life which is life indeed, except through identification with the death and grave of Jesus. We must sink deep down into reunion with Him who lay there as our representative. But as God takes us at our word, and begins to strip us of all we had taken pride in ; as the fear of what may be involved crosses our hearts with its chill dread—again we may be assured as we hear the angel say, “ Fear not, ye who seek Jesus that was crucified.”

And when at last you are seeking to follow Him through the valley of shadow—Fear not ! You will never see Him as He is, till this mortal is surrendered, and the house not made with hands entered. But if the heart faints, and the flesh fails, fear not ye, who through that mysterious change seek Jesus that was crucified, but now liveth forevermore at the right hand of God.

He was with the wild beasts ; and the angels ministered unto Him.

Mark i. 13.

IN what different circumstances is the last Adam to the first ! He began in a garden which the Lord God had planted ; but his great Anti-type in a *wilderness*, the thorns of which spoke of that primal sin. But whereas the first Adam transformed the garden into a wilderness, the last will convert all desert places into gardens—whether they be in the heart, or the world around—so that they shall blossom as the rose.

To Adam the *beasts* came, that he might name them ; but at the coming of the last Adam they were wild. “He was with the *wild* beasts.” Yet they were tame to his pure manhood. “He had dominion over the works of God’s hands.” On his brow the crown of royalty over the inferior races, which man had lost, was already placed. Is it not also true that holy men still have power over the lower creation ? Certainly Francis of Assissi had. And in the ages, yet future, the children shall play, unhurt, amid the wild beasts of the forest.

Again it is true of thee, O son of man, that, like thy Lord, thou art between the wild beasts and *the angels*. On the one side thou touchest the lower, and on the other the higher. At every moment thou art called to choose between these twain. Thy body calls thee this way, and thy spirit that. Be sure to deny the lower appetites ; rule them ; be king and lord in the realm of thy soul. Make them crouch around thee, as the lions of Daniel’s den. Get thy Lord to master them for thee. Else thou wilt miss the angels of God, who come to encamp around thee, and minister to thee, as one of the heirs of salvation. Was it here that Christ learned to contrast His homelessness with the lairs of the beasts ?

New wine into fresh wine-skins.

Mark ii. 22 (R. V.).

AH, our Lord ! Thou hast been speaking of the bridegroom and His coming to the Feast. Thou remindest us of the olden comparison of Thy love as better than wine, and of Thy first miracle at Cana of Galilee. May Thy love be poured into our hearts as the fresh juice crushed from the grapes ! We have no love of our own to offer Thee ; but, oh, pour Thy love into hearts that yearn to love Thee with Thy love. And let it not be only the memory of the love that was, but the living, fresh enjoyment of the love that is ever new. The new wine of Thy love is what we long for, that it may sweep into our hearts as the spring tide along the golden sands, which it frees from their accumulation of *débris* and waste. Oh for the constraints of Thy love—new, fresh, living !

But the Master says, Children, if you have your request, the new wine may refuse to take on with the old shapes ; it will make for itself new channels and forms of manifestations ; when others fast, you will feast ; when others feast, you will be sad. You will be counted eccentric and peculiar. Men will murmur at you, and find fault. They may even cast you out of their churches and social circles.

There is but one answer : Leave us not to ourselves. Permit us not to follow the promptings and suggestions of our undisciplined wills ; but provide for us the new wine-skins also. Show us what Thou wouldst have us be and do ; and let the methods in which our hearts' devotion shall express itself be so lovely, so befitting, so helpful to the world, and so full of God, that men may recognize Thy hand, and adore Thee. Let not Thy love be spilled, but stored for the refreshment of others through our lives. Oh, give us love !

THIS is the threefold work of the Church, and of each disciple.

That we might be with Him.—The Master dearly loves our company. Let us seek it more. Not necessarily praying, or praising, or learning—but just being quietly with Him. It was said of a holy man, Mons. de Rentz, that his union and converse with God were so wonderful, that after he had spent several hours therein, he found himself in the end as if he had only then begun it, except only that he had then yet more desire to continue it. And at length he arrived to that height that it seemed as though he never ended it at all; being wholly and constantly in inward recollection and application to God. After whose example let us press, that we may enjoy like near approach to God, and our lives be suitably ordered for His glory.

That He might send them forth to preach.—He cannot come forth from the secret chamber of eternity to preach, as once He was wont to do; and therefore He is ever raising up voices, witnesses, lips which He teaches how to speak, and touches with His live coal. Has He not sent you forth, if not by lip, yet by life to bear witness to His love? Like the seraphim, if you have two pair of wings for reverent modesty, you have at least one pair for flight. Oh, breathe the prayer, *Send me.*

That they might have authority over demons.—The power of Satan is strong; it mastered Adam, but it met more than its match in the Christ-nature. If that nature is regnant in you, you, too, will have power over all the power of the enemy. Nothing shall by any means hurt you, and you will be able to deliver others who have long been held captive.

THERE is enough nutriment in the land for the thorns alone or for the wheat alone, but not for both ; and so there is a brief struggle for mastery, in which the sturdy weed prevails against the slender wheat, and chokes it. Nourishment which should go to its support is drained away from it ; and though it does not actually expire, it leads a struggling existence, and becomes unfruitful. What are these weeds ?

For the poor man—Cares.—The Greek word for care is Division. Cares divide our heart, and distract it in many different directions. What shall we eat ? What shall we drink ? Where-withal shall we be clothed ? How shall we meet our rent and other expenses ? It is almost impossible to settle to our prayer, or Bible-study, or Christian work, or to the culture of the soul-life, while questions like these intrude. What shall the poor man do to prevent the word becoming unfruitful ? He must take his cares to his Father, and by one act deposit them in His safe-keeping. And thereafter, as a care tries to break in on the peace of his heart, he must treat it as a positive temptation, handing it over to God.

For the prosperous man—Riches.—They will distract as much as anxiety does. How much they amount to ! Oh, the endless figurings in the brain—how to keep, or invest, or increase. The case for him is to look on all he has as a stewardship for God, deducting only a moderate percentage for himself.

For us all—Lusts.—Strong and inordinate desires for what may be right in itself, but which we follow with extravagant zest. What is right in itself may become wrong if we put it in God's place, and allow it to monopolize us unduly. Oh, Great Husbandman, root up the thorns by Thy Holy Spirit !

Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?

Mark v. 35.

WHAT hopelessness! They had watched the sweet flower fade, till no color was left on the pale cheek, and the merry voice was still; and then they thought of the Galilean Teacher: "Why cost Him time and trouble? His visit will be useless now! It was very kind of Him to be willing to come! But it is now of no use! Very kind; but no use."

We go to God in comparatively small trials, and think He can help us. But there are times when we say: It is no use troubling further; we must just bear our trial as well as we can, God Himself cannot help us. Can He give back that twin-soul? Can He restore the love that has died out? Can He undo this unhappy marriage? Can He deliver from that lifelong paralysis? Life is extinct; hope is dead; the light has dipped below the horizon. It is no use to trouble God or man. We have no alternative but to suffer till eternity explain the mysteries of time.

But Jesus knows the way out. He says in His sweet undertone, "Fear not! only believe." He has the keys of death. He never would have let things come to this awful pass by His delay unless He had known that, even if the worse came to the worst, all would end well. He has purposely delayed till this, that He might have the better opportunity of showing you what God can do. Fear not! the hand of the Almighty Saviour has yours within its grasp. He will not let you stumble as you go down this dark staircase by His side. Only believe: have faith in Him. All may seem very mysterious now, but you will come to see that it was the wisest and best after all. You shall yet clasp to your heart the lost one, arrayed in resurrection beauty.

They told Him all things, whatsoever they had done, and taught. Mark vi. 30 (R. V.).

TALKING things over with Jesus! It is a precious secret! When one has been out in the world, it is delightful to talk over what has happened in the seclusion of the home. We have read of a wife who reserved one room in the house, which no one was permitted to enter but her husband and herself; and there they interchanged their mutual confidences. So it is a blessed habit to talk over everything with Jesus, and to review the events of the past beneath the light of His loving eyes.

"We have had much success, Master," we cry; "the cities were moved; the devils were subject; the crowds followed us everywhere." Ah, children, He seems to say, Those who cry "Hosanna" to-day will cry "Crucify" to-morrow: the real work of God is not done amid congratulating crowds, but in the heart's depths, and in the ante-chamber. See that ye dwell not on the excitement of the outward reception, lest you attribute your success to something in yourselves, and pride yourselves upon it, and become unsuitable for My use. All success comes from above.

"We have been greatly persecuted," and our mission seems to have been a failure, Master," we cry at another time. "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Care not for it, the same wise Counsellor replies: I at least am satisfied; I will see to it that your reward is according to your faithfulness, if not to your success; and there shall be a remnant of good soil that shall repay one hundredfold.

Thus His loving words extract the poison from success, and rally us from despondency. Oh, Christian workers, get into the secret of His presence, that He may correct, criticise, or encourage as He please.

This He said, making all meats clean.

Mark vii. 19 (R. V.).

THIS is a remarkable rendering of the Revisers, which has the support of their profound scholarship; and inaugurates an era in the history of the Levitical institutions. Before this hour arrived men were clean if they ate certain kinds of food, and unclean if they ate others. But from this moment, the Evangelist tells us, these outward distinctions were abolished. Henceforth all meats were to be viewed by the followers of Jesus as equally clean. There is, however, need that we should remember two or three things in respect to food. (1) *That every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it can be received with thanksgiving.* The act of thanksgiving is the test for the fitness and unfitness of food, as the ancient sign was supposed to be when made by the knight over a glass of wine offered by a stranger. Do not touch what you cannot thank God for.

(2) *Take care to eat for the need of the body rather than for its pleasure.*—There are a great many dainties and luxuries heaped on our tables which we take simply for the pleasure of eating. It is here that we are assailed with temptation, and need to be on our guard. The fact of food being pleasant eating is not in itself sufficient to justify our taking it. It may clog our digestion, and impair our power for thought and prayer and service.

(3) *Be moderate in the amount you eat.*—Quite as many over-eat as over-drink. We should always have the girded loin. The majority of the diseases of modern life have been traced to the habit of eating to excess. We are told by eminent authorities that we ought not to rise from table with the sense of having eaten to the full. Let your moderation in this also be known to all men.

He sighed deeply in His spirit.

Mark viii. 12.

THIS Evangelist twice over calls attention to the Lord's sighs—in vii. 34, and here. A sigh is one of the most touching and significant tokens of excessive grief! When Nature is too deeply overwrought to remember her necessary inspirations, and has to compensate for their omission by one deep-drawn breath, we sigh, we sigh deeply in our spirit.

Looking up to heaven, He sighed.—As the deaf mute stood before Him—an image of all the closed hearts around Him; of all the inarticulate unexpressed desires; of all the sin and sorrow of mankind—the sensitive heart of Jesus responded with a deep-drawn sigh. But there was simultaneously a heavenward look, which mingled infinite hope in it. If the sigh spoke of His tender sympathy, the look declared His close union with God, by virtue of which He was competent to meet the direst need. Whenever you sigh, look up to heaven. Heaven's light turns tears to jewels!

He sighed deeply.—The obdurate and impenetrable hardness of the Pharisees; their willful misinterpretation of His words and mission; their pride and bigotry—wrung the Lord's heart with bitterness. He turned sorrowfully away. There was no possibility of furnishing help, since on their side there was no desire for it, or belief in Him. Perhaps such sighs still break from His heart, as He views mankind; but through them He is doing His best to bring about the time when all sorrow and sighing shall flee away forever.

The Son of God, in doing good, would look to heaven and sigh; but His sighs were followed by the touch and word of power. Let us not be content with the sigh of sympathy and regret.

If Thou canst . . . And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst !
Mark ix. 22, 23.

YES, there was an *if* in this sad case. But the father put it in the wrong place. He put it against Christ's power, "If Thou canst do anything." But it was really on the side of his own ability to believe. If only he believed, all else would be easily possible. Even though his faith were small, it would suffice ; the tiniest seed can appropriate the chemical products of the soil, and transmute them into digestible products ; the narrowest channel will suffice for the passage of the waters of the whole ocean if you give time enough. Let us not worry about the greatness or smallness of our faith ; the main point is as to whether it is directed toward the living Saviour.

There are many issues to which these words may be applied. *If* Jesus can save me from the power of sin ! No ; *if* thou canst believe, He can. *If* Jesus can deliver out of a mesh of temptation and perplexity ! No ; *if* thou canst believe, He will. *If* Jesus can revive His work mightily to the upbuilding of His Church and the ingathering of the lost ! No ; if thou canst believe for it.

Dost thou want that faith ? It may be had thus. Look away from difficulty and temptation to Jesus ; consider Him ; feed thy faith on its native food of promise ; familiarize thyself with fellowship with the promises ; study what He has done for others : thus thou wilt believe. For every thought of thy little faith take ten thoughts of His faithfulness.

" All things are possible to God,
To Christ the power of God in man ;
To me, when I am all subdued,
When I in Christ am formed again,
And witness from my sins set free,
All things are possible to me."

And Jesus was going before them.

Mark x. 32 (R. V.).

THE radiant vision of the Transfiguration was deliberately forsaken, as the Lord took the way of the cross, going to Jerusalem to die. The shadow of His awful exodus had already fallen upon the little group. Behold that resolute figure—the wan face lit up with the fire of an invincible resolve—going in front, climbing the difficult ascent. The apostles cannot keep step with His eager steps, and they fear as an instinctive dread of coming events casts its chilling mantle around them. There was something in their Master they could not understand.

Such moments come to all lives, when Jesus leads us to the cross. How often He asks for a deeper consecration; a more complete crossing of natural inclination for the sake of His Gospel; an intenser purpose. At His bidding we must tear ourselves away from ambitions which had fascinated, and dreams which had allured. We must no longer live on the lower level, however pleasant to flesh and blood, but gird ourselves to go up to Jerusalem.

At such moments He always goes before us. We may not see Him until we begin to follow in the direction of His voice; but so soon as we set ourselves to obey, we become aware of His prevenient grace. He is just in front. He never puts forth His own sheep without going before them. He never asks us to tread a path which has not been trodden by His footsteps. Happy are they who follow Him!

In the first effort to follow Jesus, there may be amazement and not a little fear. The unaccustomed path, the strange look on His face, the shadow of the cross—all dissuade us. But as He dilates on the joy set before Him and us, we learn to think lightly of the difficulties in comparison with the goal.

Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.
Mark xi. 22.

THE margin of the A. v. suggests that this command might be rendered, Have the faith of God. As long as I live I shall remember this text in connection with my first meeting with Hudson Taylor. He was to preach for me on a Sunday morning, now years ago, and gave out this as his text. But he said that he had always interpreted it as dealing rather with God's faith to us than ours to Him ; so that it ran thus: *Reckon on God's faithfulness.*

1. *We must be sure that we are on God's plan.*—There is a prepared path for us, along which God has stored up all necessary supplies. But if we want those supplies, we must find and follow it. Along the track which He has marked out between this and Home, our Father has erected cairns full of provisions ; but we must let His route prevail over our own notions and wishes, if we are to enjoy His preparations.

2. *We must be prepared to wait on Him.*—For these things He will be inquired of. Though He knows what we need, He expects our humble request, that we may be perpetually reminded of our entire dependence on Him. He sometimes appears to tarry to draw out our faith and prayer. But He will never utterly fail.

3. *We must walk worthily of Him.*—God shows Himself strong only on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him. By His enabling grace we must put away the old manner of life, and be renewed in the spirit of our mind, that we may be such whom the great God shall delight to honor. Let such trust Him to the hilt ; they will find Him faithful. He will never put us into positions of peril and responsibility, and leave us to take our chance.

He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.

Mark xii. 27.

SINCE God spoke of Himself as the God of the patriarchs, centuries after they had been borne to their graves, it stood to reason that they were yet living; and on this ground our Lord met the allegation that there is no life beyond death.

Death is not a state or condition, but an act.—We speak of the dead; but in point of fact there are none such. We should speak of those who have died. They were living up to the moment of death; but they were living quite as much afterward. Death is like birth, an act, a transition, a passage into a freer life. Never think of a death as a state, but as resembling a bridge which, for a moment, casts its shadow on the express train, which flashes beneath, but does not stay.

All our dear ones are living.—As vividly, as keenly, as intensely as ever: with all the love and faith and intelligence with which we were wont to associate their beloved personality. It may be that they think of us as only half alive, compared with their own intense and vivid experience of the life which draws its breath from the manifested presence of God. Oh, do not fear that they will cease to recognize, know, or love you! Always it remains true, “Without us they cannot be made perfect.”

Those who live on either side of death may meet in God.—Those who are present in the body, and those who are absent from it, meet in proportion as they approach God. When we come near Him in thought, and prayer, and love, we are come to the spirits of the just made perfect. God is the glorious centre of all the lines that radiate into all worlds. “Ye are come to God, the Judge of all, . . . and to the spirits of the just made perfect.”

Ye know not when the lord of the house cometh.

Mark xiii. 35 (R. V.).

NO, we know not. It is better that we should not know. But He must be very near. *Even* has passed ; the beams of His presence had just died off the world, and the after-glow was still lingering in the ministry of the apostles in the early Church. *Midnight* has passed ; it reached its deepest darkness in the middle ages, when only a few holy souls shone like stars in the surrounding gloom. *Cock-crow* has passed ; Wickliffe and Luther, and others, heralded the morning. And now the *morning* is upon us ; nay, it is shining more and more unto the perfect day. He must be near, even at the doors. Be ready, O virgin souls, to go forth to meet Him !

But may not these words be interpreted in yet another way ? Jesus comes to us in the evening twilight, when the joy of our life seems slowly waning. He comes to us in the deep night of depression, bereavement, and anguish. He comes to us in the hope and expectancy of each new dawn, when we gird ourselves to fresh toils and endeavors. He comes to us in the morning, and satisfies us with His mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all the day. Only let us watch for His coming, with ears attent to His lightest foot-fall, His softest whisper. Then, when He shows Himself through the lattice, or softly whispers, "Come away," we shall arise and go forth with Him to the beds of lilies and the gardens of myrrh.

Are we quite sure that we belong to His house ? "Whose house are we," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. But there are conditions : we must be born into it by regeneration ; we must walk as becometh saints ; we must hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. Christ is Lord over this house, and His will is law (Heb. iii. 1-9).

But Jesus said, Let her alone.

Mark xiv. 6.

THE lovers of Jesus are often misunderstood. Those who judge only by a utilitarian standard refuse to acknowledge the worth of their deeds. You might as well despise the electric light because it makes no register on a gas-meter. But when the voices of criticism and jealousy are highest, Jesus steps in and casts the shield of His love around the trembling, disconcerted soul, saying, Let him alone. So He speaks still :—

To Satan.—The adversary stands near to resist and tempt. As Judas criticised Mary, so the Evil One seems at times to pour a perpetual stream of chilling criticism on all we say and do ; or he meets us at every turn with some evil suggestion. But Jesus is on the watch, and He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear ; but when heart and flesh fail, He will step in and say, Let him (or her) alone.

To sorrow.—We must pass through the fire, and be subjected to the lapidary's wheel ; we must drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism ; we must bear our cross after Him. But He is always on the alert. And whenever the feeble flesh is at an end of its power of endurance, He will step in and say, Let be—it is enough.

To human unkindness.—Some of us are called to suffer most from our fellows ; our foes belong to our own household ; our brother Cain hates us. It is hard to bear. To have one's motives misunderstood and maligned ; to lose one's good name ; to be an outcast—all this is hard. But God has planted a hedge about us, and none may pass through it, except He permit. Even Satan recognizes this, as we learn from the Book of Job.

My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

Mark xv. 34.

THIS was the darkest hour of the Saviour's human life. Lover and friend stood away from Him; and those for whom His blood was being shed covered Him with contumely and abuse. Let us consider:

His quotation of Scripture.—He is quoting the first verse of Psalm xxii., which is truly known as the Psalm of the Cross. It may be that He recited to Himself that wonderful elegy, in which David was to anticipate so minutely the sufferings of his Lord. What meaning there was for those dying lips in the 7th verse: "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn"; in the 13th: "They gape upon Me"; in the 14th: "All My bones are out of joint"; in the 17th: "I may tell all My bones"; or in the 18th: "They part My garments and cast lots." What sacred feet trod those well-worn steps!

His vicarious sufferings.—There is no possible way of understanding, or interpreting, these words, except by believing that He was suffering for sins not His own; that He was being made sin for us; that He was bearing away the sin of the world. It is not for a moment conceivable that the Father could have ever seemed to forsake His well-beloved Son, unless He had stood as the Representative of a guilty race, and during those hours of midday midnight had become the propitiation for the sins of the world.

His perfect example of the way of Faith.—In doing the Father's will, He yielded up His life even to the death of the cross. But amid it all He said, "*My God, My God.*" He still held to the Father with His two hands. And His faith conquered. The clouds broke; the clear heaven appeared; He died with a serene faith. "My God" was exchanged for "Father, into Thy hands."

The Lord working with them.

Mark xvi. 20.

THIS was the secret of the successes of the early Church. Theirs was the simple commission to preach ; but wherever they did so, the Lord confirmed their word with signs following. In Jerusalem, Samaria, Antioch, Rome, and to the uttermost end of the world, wherever these simple men stood up and made their proclamation, their invisible Lord was present, and His Spirit bore witness.

Nothing less than this will account for the marvellous successes of those early preachers. He who sat at the right hand of God in the attitude of majestic rest was always beside them in the intensity of the most untiring work. What was done by them on earth was wrought by Himself. His right hand and His holy arm got Him the victory.

This blessed partnership has never been repealed. Jesus has never withdrawn from the compact ; and if we could only dare to count and reckon on Him, we would find that He was co-operating in church, and Sunday-school, and mission-station. There are a few rules to be observed, however, before we can count upon Him thus : (1) We must be clean in heart and life. He cannot identify Himself with those who are consciously delinquent. (2) We must not seek our own glory, but God's, and the pure blessing of men. (3) We must use the Word of God as our sword, our lever, our balm, our cordial, our charm. (4) We must be in loving harmony with those who name His name, as He cannot countenance seclusion or uncharitable feeling. (5) We must by faith claim and reckon upon Him—speaking to Him as to the message before it is delivered, relying on Him during its delivery, and conferring with Him about its effect. Not anxious or elated, but at rest.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it unto me according to Thy word.

Luke i. 38.

THE angel's message meant, for this young, pure-hearted girl, a great deal of misunderstanding and reproach. It was inevitable that clouds would gather around her character, which would sorely perplex the good man to whom she was betrothed. But as soon as she realized that this lot was ordained for her by God she humbly acquiesced, with these model words of patient faith. Let us often say them :

First : To His commands.—God's voice often speaks within our hearts, and no word of His is devoid of power. We must test what seems to be His voice by these three corroborations : First, His Word ; second, by the trend of outward circumstances ; third, by the advice of Christian people not immediately interested. When these concur, we may take it that God has spoken to us, and whatever the burden of His words we must respond—Be it unto me according to Thy word.

Secondly : To the responsibilities thrust on us.—It may be a trusteeship for some dying friend ; a charge of orphan children ; a babe cast on our parentage ; an invalid ; a difficult and trying piece of Christian enterprise. But whenever it comes on us, imposed by the evident appointment of our Father, notwithstanding the shrinking of our flesh and the fearfulness of our soul, we must say : Be it unto me according to Thy word.

Thirdly : To any burden of pain and suffering.—Are you one whom God has set apart to manifest the power of His grace in suffering and pain ? Are you sleepless by night, and helpless by day ? Are you likely to spend years in one position, as paralyzed or rheumatic ? Well, still dare to look up and say : Be it unto me according to Thy word.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.

Luke ii. 14.

THESE twain are joined together, and none can sunder them. Do you want peace? Your highest aim must be the glory of God. Do you seek God's glory as your highest aim? then, the inevitable result will be the peace that passeth understanding.

Glory to God in the highest.—It was said of the soldiers of the first Napoleon that they were content to die in the ditch if only he rode over them to victory. With their last breath they cried, "Long live the Emperor!" It seemed as though they had lost all thought and care of their own interests so long as glory accrued to his name. So should it be of us. Higher than our own comfort, or success, or popularity, should be the one thought of the glory of our God. Let Christ be honored, loved, exalted, at whatever cost to us.

On earth, peace.—It will come, because when the heart has only one aim to follow, it is delivered from dividing and distracting cares. It will come, because the glory of God is so lofty an aim that it lifts the soul into the atmosphere of the heavenly and eternal world, where peace reigns unbroken. It will come, because we are not greatly troubled by the reverses and alternations of fortune that are incident to all work in this world, since the main object is always secure and beyond fear of failure. What though there be the ebb and flow of the wave, yet the tide is certainly coming up the shore, and will presently stand at high-water mark.

This peace is said in the R. v. to come only to men in whom God is well pleased. Live to please God, and He will breathe on thee His peace. Seek His glory, and He will make thy heart His home. Do His will, and thereby good shall come to thee.

He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.
Luke iii. 16.

THEY had received the negative, *water* ; they were to receive the positive, *fire*. Water is not sufficient for natures such as ours. The Baptist pointed to a greater Baptist than himself. Jesus plunges the soul into a baptism of fire.

Fire cleanses.—Ore may be mingled with earthly ingredients from which it is imperative to free it. A chisel or pickaxe could not extricate it. But when it is plunged into the furnace, the metal runs out in a molten stream. So our characters are full of impurities and earthly ingredients ; but as they are brought into contact with the power of the Holy Spirit, these are eliminated and drop away, and we attain degrees of purity and love which otherwise had made us unserviceable to our dear Lord. Do not seek to rid yourself of these things as a condition of His gracious cleansing, but seek the baptism of the Spirit, and He will free thee ; for He is like a consuming fire.

Fire illuminates.—As the express-train hurries the traveller by night through a district where the smelting furnaces are in full blast, his eyes are arrested by their glow, and the very heavens are lurid with the light, reflected for miles. So when the Spirit comes in power to the soul, He teaches us to know God, and truth, and things hidden from the wise and prudent. The fires that sanctify, illuminate us.

Fire enkindles.—It is contagious. It will spread over an immense area, where inflammable material attracts it. A match may light up a bonfire that will burn for hours. So when the Spirit of God touches a soul, like an unlit candle, it begins to glow ; and from it the blessed spark may pass from heart to heart, and church to church, till an entire continent may blaze with heavenly fire.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me.
Luke iv. 18.

AS the Lord emerged from the waters of baptism, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit in a bodily shape descended upon Him and abode. Then His mouth was opened, and His public ministry commenced. Now He stepped forth into the world, saying :

“ The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the
poor :
He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The Spirit was given Him without measure, as the power in which He was to cast out devils, preach the Gospel, and glorify His Father by His human life and ministry.

What that scene was in the life of the Lord, Pentecost was for the Church. Then she was anointed for her Divine mission among men ; the unction of the Holy One rested upon her, to be continued and renewed as the centuries slowly passed. What happened for the Church should take place in the history of each member of it. This anointing is for all, is to be received by faith, and is especially intended to equip us for work. Hast thou had thy share? If not, art thou not making a mistake in attempting God's work without it? If Jesus did not put His hand to this work till He was conscious of His anointing, though He was one with the Holy Spirit in an especial sense, how much less should we ! Hast thou known it? Seek it on the threshold of each new enterprise. Be satisfied with nothing less than to be anointed with fresh oil.

He stretched forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will ; be thou clean. *Luke v. 13.*

THIS leper, as the physician-evangelist remarks, was *full* of leprosy. It was a very aggravated case. He lay in the dust before Jesus. What a contrast ! Loathsomeness and Divine beauty ; disease and health ; humanity at its worst and best ; sinner and Saviour ; one of Satan's most miserable victims, and the Almighty Deliverer. So, my reader, if thou art conscious of a heart and life which are full of sin, I would have thee meet thy Saviour now. There is no *if* about His power—even the leper recognized that. The only doubt was about the Saviour's will : there is, however, no doubt on this score now, since He has healed myriads, and promises healing to all who come. Throw thyself, then, at His feet, and ask for cleansing.

“He stretched forth His hand, and touched him.” No one else would have dared to do as much. To touch that flesh, according to the Levitical code, would induce uncleanness. But Jesus shrank not. On the one hand, He knew that the ceremonial restrictions were abolished in Himself : on the other, He desired to teach that sin cannot defile the Divine holiness of the Saviour. Whatever be the stories of sin that are breathed into His ear ; whatever the open bruises and putrefying sores which are opened to His touch ; whatever the sights and scenes with which He has to cope—none of these can leave a taint of evil in His sinless heart. It would be as impossible for sin to soil Christ as for a plague to contaminate flame. And He *will* heal thee. Dare to claim it.

“Break up the heavens, O Lord, and far
Through all yon starlight keen
Draw me, thy bride—a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.”

Every one when he is perfected shall be as his Master.

Luke vi. 40 (R. V.).

WE are not perfected yet.—There is a great chasm between our highest and our Master's lowest; between where we stop and He begins: between our light, which is twilight at best, and His meridian glory. When we compare ourselves with ourselves, or with our neighbors, our standard is altogether too low; we should compare ourselves with Him, the beloved Master. Job, who was reputed perfect, abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes when he had *seen* God, of whom he had formerly only heard.

But we shall be perfected one day.—That *when* has a hopeful ring. But to what period does the Master point? Not till sorrow, sanctified by God's grace, has done its work; not till the snow and frost, the light shower and the bitter wind, the earth and sun, have contributed their shares to the desired quota. Not till the perfect image of Jesus has emerged from the sculptured stone; not till the molten metal reflects each lineament of the glorified Lord.

When we are perfected we shall be as our Master.—"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." It seems altogether too much to expect! To think that we shall be changed into His image; that we shall bear His impress; that we shall be as like Him as Gideon's brethren to Gideon, of whom the princes of Midian testified that they were like the children of a king. Yet it shall be so. The Lord Jesus became like unto us in our low estate, that we should become like Him in His glory. There must ever be the limitation of the creature as compared with Him by whom all things were made. But in our measure there shall be the same perfect beauty—His beauty upon us—for a mountain lake may as perfectly reflect the wide blue heaven as an ocean.

When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. Luke vii. 13.

NO widow stands by the bier of her only son, no mother by the empty cot of her babe, no lover beside the fading beauty of his beloved—but the Son of Man, unseen but glorious, is at hand, seeing, understanding, touched with compassion, and saying, in His tenderest tones, Weep not !

Weep not : Love is eternal.—Hast thou forgotten that there are three things which abide forevermore, the greatest of which is love? Is it likely that those blessed ties which have woven us to others can be snapped by death, which can only touch the body, but is not able to reach the soul? Is not love of God—and can God's love change, and pass away? No; though severed from your sight, the dear ones that are gone are thine to-day, and have not forgotten, but love thee still. Without us they cannot be made perfect.

Weep not : recognition of the beloved dead is certain.—Did not Mary and the women, Peter and five hundred more, recognize Jesus after His resurrection? Is He not the same Man? Are we not to be like Him? Recognition went so far, in His case, that the Magdalene recognized the very tones of His voice, when He said *Mary*, and she answered *Rabboni*. Yes, though refined and purified, the face thou hast loved shall smile, and the tones that have made thy heart-music shall speak again. Weep not !

Weep not : they shall rise again, nevermore to be separated.—The Lord raised this youth to life ; but there had to be another parting, when his mother or he died. But when thy dear ones are reunited to thee, there will be no more partings. There shall be no more sea. Thy heart shall find its mate. Thou and he shall go no more out.

But Jesus said, Some one did touch Me.

Luke viii. 46 (R. v.).

AMID the pressure of the crowd that crushed on Him from all sides, Jesus detected the light touch of one thin hand, which drew from Him healing virtue. We may be very near Christ, and throng Him, without touching ; but no one can touch Him, however lightly, without deriving the very grace needed.

We think of Jesus to-day amid the thronging crowds of angels and spirits of the just made perfect. Amid their voices will ours be heard ? Amid the pressure of their attendance on His sacred person will He stay to recognize our poor trembling touch ? Amid the vast interests that depend on Him, the government of the universe, the holding together and consistence of all things, is there any likelihood of our need asserting itself successfully ? See, He is hastening on to raise the dead ; there is the daughter of many a Jairus waiting for His summons, in the cemeteries and sleeping places of the dead. Will He stay for me ? Yes, always.

There is the touch of *prayer and faith*. Thou canst never exercise it, however simply, without eliciting an immediate response. The conductor can detect the tiny note of a piccolo in an orchestra ; and Christ is moved by a whisper, a sigh, a tear, a touch. There may be a good deal of mistake and superstition, as there was in this woman, who seemed to have thought that virtue clung to His robes ; but He will distinguish the soul of holy trust amid many false ingredients. There is also the touch of *affection*. He knew when the woman crept to kiss His feet. He did not instantly speak of it, but said afterward, " From the time I came in she hath not ceased to kiss My feet." Not one loving expression from thy heart to His is lost on Him !

Behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah.

Luke ix. 31.

WHAT a spectacle was this, on the slopes of Lebanon, with light transcending that of the moonlight shining in the upper heights ! And what converse ! Possibly that transfiguration was an example of the way in which Adam and all his race might have passed into heaven, had not death come on us all through sin ; and therefore it was the greater proof of the love of our dear Lord, when He deliberately turned from all the radiant light and took the way of the cross. His death is here called an *exodus* : such is the Greek word rendered *decease*. How much these two great souls, Moses and Elijah, had to say about it : the one representing the law ; the other the prophets.

Moses would remind Him of the lamb that would be slain before the children of Israel could escape from Egypt ; of the rock that must be smitten, before the water could flow forth for the thirsty crowds ; of the serpent that must be fixed on the pole, before the dying Israelites could look and live.

Elijah would remind the Lord of Psalm xxii., beginning with a wail and ending with praise ; of Isaiah liii., finishing with a burst of triumph ; and many another sacred and familiar passage.

And after all it was only an *exodus*, the going forth of His spirit from the Time-sphere to the Eternal ; from contact with a very weary world to victory and joy-mending. Lighted by the She-chinah glory ; following through the Red Sea of Blood ; hastening to the morning, with its vision of enemies strewn dead on the seashore. The memory of this talk so far robbed death of its terror, in the heart of one of the disciples at least, that afterward he described his own death as an *exodus* (2 Peter i. 15).

I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.

Luke x. 18 (R. V.).

THIS was Christ's vision of the effect of His work in man's nature, and on man's behalf. For ages Satan had vaunted his power over man; but now and henceforward the demon-nature was to be vanquished by the name and nature of Jesus Christ. "The demons are subject to us in Thy name." Whenever you are tempted by the demon of alcohol, of passion, of jealousy, or any other, claim instantly the protection of the Name which is above every name: make the Name and Nature of Jesus your strong tower into which you shall run and be safe: realize all that He stands for: and you will find that the demons will be subject to you. In your life also, Satan will fall from heaven, and be trodden under your feet.

And what is true in your own life is true also of your influence over others. If you dare to live in the risen Christ, you share His empire and all the fruits of His victory over Satan. He gives you authority over serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. The Christ nature within you becomes the dominant, triumphant power to which all power must ultimately yield. Dare to use it. In conflict with the demon spirits that haunt so many lives; in antagonizing the giant forces that are so strongly entrenched in our natural life, the ravages of vice—be sure to rely, not on numbers or organization, but on the name of Jesus, used not as a charm, but as representing His living and ascended might.

And let it be carefully noted that as the success of these disciples over a few demons in the villages and towns of Israel reacted on the balance of power in the heavenlies, so there is no victory won anywhere by any lonely disciple, or handful of disciples, that does not react on the entire battlefield.

Lord, teach us to pray.

Luke xi. 1.

IT was a wise and good request, prompted by the Saviour's own practice. He did not, in the first instance, command His disciples to pray; but He gave Himself to the blessed practice of prayer, and this made them eager to learn and practice the holy art. This is the best way of inculcating new and holy habits on those who surround us. Do not begin by exhorting them; but by living before them a life so holy, so unselfish, so consecrated and devout, that they shall spontaneously approach you, saying, "Give us your secret; tell us how we may do and become as you." It is a holy life which constitutes our best pulpit.

We should daily ask the Master to teach us to pray. Each time we kneel in prayer we may well preface our petitions with the sentence: "We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but by Thy Holy Spirit, Lord, teach us to pray." And probably the Lord's answer will fall into suggestions, borrowed from the form and model of prayer which He gave His disciples. It has been called the Lord's Prayer; it should be called the Disciples'.

Address prayer to the Father, through the Son. Do not be selfish in prayer; but look out on the needs of others, incorporating them in every petition—*us, we, our*. Remember, you are speaking to your Father, and that His honor and glory should have a paramount and foremost place. If you desire first the hallowing of His name, and the coming of His kingdom, all your personal needs and desires will fall easily and naturally into their place, which will be a comparatively subordinate one. You will need forgiveness as often and as regularly as your daily bread. Be, also, direct and definite in prayer.

Be not anxious.

Luke xii. 11 (R. V.).

SO often through this discourse the Lord refers to anxiety. "Be not anxious how or what ye shall answer" (ver. 11). "Which of you by being anxious can add?" (ver. 25). "Why are ye anxious?" (ver. 26). There must have been a great strain on the crowds who listened to Him; and there was every likelihood of the strain becoming even greater for His disciples as the years passed on. So, also, the characteristic of our age is anxious strain.

But the heart of Jesus was always at peace. His life was calm amid the storms of life; as the coral-island, with its fronded palms and lagoons of still water, is peaceful amid the storm-tossed ocean, because of the protection of its reef. The surf breaks there, but does not intrude further. The secrets of Jesus were the perpetual presence of God in His soul, and His never-faltering faith in the loving, careful providence of God in all the experiences of His checkered life.

Can we not have this? We may if we are willing to pay the price. If we will resign or surrender our will utterly to Him; if we will tear down every veil that might hide His face, and throw open our whole being to His indwelling and use; if we will cease scheming, planning, devising, and fall back on the absolute care and arrangements of God; if we will learn to reckon on God as absolutely as on any resourceful human friend; if we will dare to believe that God holds Himself reponsible for the sustenance and equipment for duty of all who absolutely seek His glory—then.

"Our lives shall be full of sunshine,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold up their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

Enter in by the narrow door.

Luke xiii. 24 (R. V.).

THE question which the disciples asked was for their gratification and curiosity. Men have always been curious to know what will be the numerical result of the Redeemer's work. But to such questions the Lord had no reply. He was only eager that none of those whom He loved should miss the full measure of blessedness that was within His reach ; therefore He bade each be sure of entering the narrow door, so narrow that there is no room to carry through it the love of self, the greed of gain, the thirst for the applause and rewards of the world.

We may be saved from the penalty of sin by one single glance at the Saviour, who lived, and died, and lives forevermore ; but we cannot be saved in the deepest meaning of the word, in the sense of being delivered from the love and power of sin, unless we are willing to enter through a door, so constructed and straight, that it seems impossible to effect an entrance. Art thou willing for this, willing to leave behind thy amassed and hardly-gained treasures, thy luggage and impedimenta, thy jewels and gew-gaws, thy certificate of merit and credentials, thy notions of self-importance, the weights which thou hast carried so long, the pillows with which thou art always sparing thyself from the stern realities and efforts of a noble life ? If thou art willing for this, and prepared to strive, even to the rending of thyself asunder, then thou shalt be saved from the love and tyranny of that wild, dark power, which, hitherto, has always dragged thee downward.

It is not enough to eat and drink of the blessed memorial supper, nor to listen to the voice of Jesus teaching in His Church. Many may do all this, and yet never be included in the Kingdom of Heaven.

He cannot be My disciple.

Luke xiv. 26, 27, 33.

THREE times Christ repeats these solemn words ; and it may be that earnest men have done injury to His cause, which they desired to serve, by omitting these stringent conditions in their Gospel invitations. It is quite true that whosoever will may come and take ; that whosoever believeth in Him shall never perish ; that the door of mercy stands open wide. But it is equally true that the faith that saves must pass such tests as these ; and if it does not, it is not of the quality which can bear the soul through the swelling billows of the river of death. These three tests may be classified thus :

Separation.—It sometimes happens in the disciple's life that Christ's work lies in one direction, whilst the blessed ties of home lie in another. Tender voices call ; loving hands reach out to hold him. Here the plough is waiting in its furrow ; there the hearth with its tender memory and association. At such times, for the true man, there can be but one choice.

Crucifixion.—Every one has his own cross—some one thing in which the will of God crosses his will. Jesus made that cross, and bids us take it up and bear it after Himself. Yet how many evade it, flee from it, postpone it. They think they can follow Him apart from it ; but it is impossible. We can only follow the Crucified when we bear each his own cross. And to shrink from it shows that we are not disciples.

Renunciation.—All we have must be gladly yielded when Christ asks for it. If the accumulation of a life be on one scale and Christ in the other, we must choose Christ, come what may to the rest, or we must abandon our title to discipleship.

He would not go in.

Luke xv. 28.

THE elder brother is the dark contrast which heightens the glowing picture of the repentant prodigal ; as the gargoyle does the beauty of the angel faces on the cathedral font.

When we look at sin, not in its theological aspects, but in its everyday clothes, we find that it divides itself into two kinds. We find that there are sins of the body and sins of the disposition ; or, more narrowly, sins of the passions, including all forms of lust and selfishness, and sins of the temper. The prodigal is *the* instance in the New Testament of sins of passion—the elder brother of sins of temper. Now we might be disposed to think that the prodigal is the worse sinner of these two ; but it is at least worthy of remark that as the story ends, we see him found, forgiven, restored ; whilst the elder brother is still outside the house, and an absentee from the feast. Does Christ mean that the ill-tempered murmuring of the Pharisee is more hopeless than the passion of the publican and sinner ? We must not press the thought too far ; but we may at least ask whether we are harboring, beneath a very respectable, moral exterior, the spirit of the elder brother, who plods daily to work, and is accounted a paragon of filial dutifulness, but is left without the door.

One has made a careful analysis of the ingredients that went to make up that one spiteful speech ; they come out thus : jealousy, anger, pride, uncharity, cruelty, self-righteousness, sulkiness, touchiness, doggedness. “ His speech, like the bubble escaping to the surface of the pool, betrays the rottenness beneath.” Let us carefully read our hearts, lest there be any trace of this spirit in ourselves, when others are pressing into the kingdom with joy.

OUR Lord is speaking of money and its use.

1. *He describes money.*—It is so associated with unrighteousness that He speaks of it as the *unrighteous mammon*. It was as though the inveterate money-maker, who will get money at all costs, was an idolater, prostrating himself daily in the temple of the heathen deity who bore that name. In His judgment, also, it is a very *little thing* (ver. 10). We only know how little when we compare it with the immortal qualities of a lowly character. At least, it is not the *true riches* (ver. 11). Moreover, it is not our own—it is clearly *another's*—God's (ver. 12). We have nothing that we have not received.

2. *He indicates the main use of money.*—It is God's; but He puts it into our hands to watch the use we will make of it, before He entrusts to us the true riches of eternity—just as you will test a child with a toy watch before you dare place in his hands a real one. If he is destructive of the one, you hesitate to hand him the other; whilst if he is careful, you feel able to consign to his care some family heirloom. So God is testing men by giving them money that He may know how far to trust them in the mart of the New Jerusalem.

3. *He arouses us to fidelity.*—Care for God's interests as much as the wasteful and unfaithful steward cared for his own. He used his master's money to secure a welcome to the debtor's houses when he lost his situation. But God has so arranged it, that if you use His money aright, you shall not only win His approbation, but His interests will be so coincident with yours, that when the world fades from view, those whom you have helped for God's sake shall welcome you to heaven.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.

Luke xvii. 20.

THE Kingdom is "in mystery" just now. It is hidden from mortal eye, because the King Himself is withdrawn from the visible sphere. The creation groans and travails for its manifestation. He must be manifested before we can be manifested with Him in glory. In the meanwhile, it is not without, but within; not compelling human attention, but pervading human hearts. Let us remember this *when we are lamenting the slow progress of Christianity in the world*. It appears to recede almost as quickly as it advances; what it gains in one place it loses in another. If heathen lands are receiving Christ, are not the populations of Christian lands departing from Him? Stay; you cannot tell! It is useless to argue! There may be much more good working than you know. For every bold confessor there are probably seven thousand who have not bowed to Baal.

When we are tempted to estimate our success by numerical results.—When our church is crowded; our roll of communicants constantly augmented; and the money revenue large—we are disposed to think that the cause of Christ is really advancing in our midst. It may be so. But sometimes, where numbers are scant and difficulties many, a yet deeper and more lasting result is being achieved.

When we are lamenting the apparent slowness of our growth in grace.—You do not feel as you would; nay, to judge by your emotional life you fear lest you are positively receding in the divine life; you think that the quality and quantity of your fruit unto God is decreasing. Stay; the deepest work is not always the most obvious. Before the mole appears above the wave, years of work have been expended where no eye can see; but every stone tells in the result.

Hear what the unjust judge saith.

Luke xviii. 6.

THE force of this parable lies in its succession of vivid contrasts, which rise to an irresistible climax.

The judge is unjust.—He neither fears God nor regards man. His one idea is to extort as much money as he can from the prisoners who desire to get out of jail, and from those that want to keep them in, or put others to share their fate. But God is our Father, unimpeachable in His integrity, and only eager to promote our welfare.

The judge had no personal interest in the claimant.—She had no personal attraction for him. Had she been possessed of property, he might have cared more. But now he looked on her as a pest that plagued and worried him. But we are God's elect, over whom His tender heart yearns. Did He not choose us before all the worlds unto His glory?

The judge answered the widow's cry just to save himself trouble.—Whenever he went to his seat, there she was. Though he had refused to hear her a score of times, there was her voice again, as clear and penetrating as ever. She had been forcibly hurried from his presence by his officials, and she had been borne screaming and remonstrating into the rear; but she never knew herself defeated. At last he could bear it no longer, and gave orders that her patrimony should be restored.

And will not God do as much, as, generation after generation, He sees His Church, like a widowed soul, oppressed by the great enemy and avenger? As He hears the cries of martyrs and saints; the perpetual prayer, Come, Lord Jesus; the insolent boast of the foe—will He not arise and avenge? Yes, verily, *speedily*! But it may seem long to us, because one thousand years with Him are as one day.

They said, The Lord hath need of him.

Luke xix. 34.

OH, could I hear Thee say as much of me, my blessed Lord ! Here, where two ways meet, I have been standing long, waiting for a purpose worthy to fill my soul, and task the powers that are, as yet, only in the first burst of young life.

Thou needest much and many in Thy great redemptive work. The boat to cross the lake ; the line to catch the fish ; the bread and fish to feed the crowds ; the baskets to gather up the fragments ; the chalice to hold the wine ; the dish to hold the sop ; the little child to be the text for Thy sermon ; the clay for the blind man's eyes ; the tender women to minister of their substance ; the apostles to preach Thy Gospel. Canst Thou not find a nitch for me also ?

Thou requirest *undivided loyalty*.—Born of the Virgin's womb, laid in death where man's dust had never come, Thou must have a colt on which none had ever sat. I cannot give Thee a heart which has never known another ; but I profess to Thee that there is no rival now. Thou mayest have all. Thine is the Kingdom.

Thou requirest *patience and humility*.—But these, also, Thou hast taught. I have waited patiently till this glad hour, and am quieted and humbled like a weaned child. No longer do I seek great things for myself. It is enough for me to be and do anything, if only Thou shalt be glorified.

Thou requirest, perhaps, but one brief service.—To serve Thee always with increasing fervor would be my choice ; but if Thou needest only one brief, glad hour of ministry, like that the good Ananias did to Thy Church when he ministered to Saul, then be it so. To prepare for it, and revert to it, would be my satisfaction in having lived.

Whose image and superscription hath it?

Luke xx. 24.

OUR Lord more than once compared men to coins. He spoke of the woman who lost one piece of silver, and searched till she had found it. The analogy might be carried out in many particulars; for as the ore passes through the crucible, and many another process, before it is stamped with the image of the sovereign, so do souls experience many fiery trials ere they can receive and keep the impression of heaven's mint, which is the face of Jesus.

Whose image dost thou bear?—Is there a clear-cut outline of the features of Christ, so manifest that those who touch and handle you are irresistibly reminded of Him; or have the features of your King, which were once clear-cut, become effaced?

Whose is thy superscription? Is A. D. there?—the year in which you were born into the kingdom of God, the year of our Lord, the year of your eternal life? *Is "Dei gratia" there?* (By the grace of God). So that all the while those who know you magnify the exceeding riches of His love as manifested in you. *Is "Christus Rex" there?* (Christ the King). Are you absolutely Christ's—to serve and to obey? *Is "Fid. Def." there?* (Defender of the Faith). Do you keep the deposit of Christ's holy Gospel, as you look to Him to keep the deposit which you have committed to Him? *Is the lion on the quarterings?*—speaking of the strength of the Lion of Judah imparted to your soul. *Is the harp amongst them?*—indicating the subjection of every string of your life to His finger. *Is the crown there?*—indicating how absolutely you have placed the empire of your nature upon the brow of your Lord. Then weave together the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley as the symbol of His reign.

Watch ye at every season, making supplication.

Luke xxi. 36 (R. V.).

LET us never release the girdle from around our loins, nor throw ourselves listlessly upon the bank to drink, whilst the enemy may be stealing up against the wind. It is the art of our great enemy to fill the air with the heavy breath of the poppy ; that, like the lotus-eaters of the old legend, we may be indisposed for the perils and toils of our onward journey.

Watch ye in the season of festivity.—When merry voices fill the chamber with mirth, and jokes pass ; old stories are retold ; quaint anecdotes circulated—remember to look frequently up into the Master's face, to discover if aught has covered it with shame, or filled it with regret. Let not your heart be overcharged with surfeiting drunkenness.

Watch ye in hours of stress and anxiety.—These will come between the soul and Christ, oppressing us with anxious care, leading us to think too much of the things which are seen and transient, and filling our hearts with dismay, as though the future would find us orphans and homeless, because the storm had swept away some few gatherings of the earth's perishable stores. When stocks are falling, business declining, competition increasing—Watch ! Make supplication ! Stand before the Son of Man as those whom He cannot forget or forsake.

Watch ye in seasons of tender love.—We wear armor abroad, but when we come within the closed door of the home, and our hearts expand beneath the genial warmth of kindred natures, how apt we are to cry, Now, surely, we may unbend, ungird, and let nature have free course. But the Master says, Watch ye at every season ; and He reminds us that we never cease to stand before the Son of Man.

Simon, Simon, behold Satan asked to have you that he might sift you as wheat. Luke xxii. 31.

THE Master apparently did not pray that temptation should be withheld. The quick eye of His affection had discerned the tempter's approach. His quick ear had detected Satan's request of the Father; as though he said, "Let me have the chance for one brief hour, and I will show that these men, so far from being gold, silver, and precious stones, are only wood, hay, and stubble." But though He knew all this, the Master did not request that the winnowing wind should be withheld. Why? *Because temptation is part of the present order of the world.* Why it is so we cannot tell; that it is so we know assuredly. Why the Almighty permitted the evil one to intrude into paradise, and to assail every single soul of woman born, that has passed to years of consciousness, we shall probably never understand until mystery drops from our eyes in the meridian light of heaven. We only are sure that the permission of temptation is not inconsistent with His almightiness or beneficence.

Because temptation tests character and reveals us to ourselves and to one another.—Was it not well that Peter should know how weak he was; that he might become truly penitent and converted? Was it not befitting that Judas should be exposed before the day of Pentecost? Was it not best that the foundation stones of the Church should be well tested? It is better to learn our weakness now and here than at the Judgment-seat.

But if Satan tempts, our Advocate pleads. He anticipates the advent of temptation by storing up His prayers. He warns the soul when the hawk begins to hover. If He may not arrest temptation, He will at least ask that our faith may not fail; and will seek us out as He did Peter.

Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.

Luke xxiii. 43.

TO-DAY!—Dost thou ask Me to remember thee at some distant moment, when the kingdom of which I am now laying the foundations shall have become the all-conquering kingdom of the world? Thou needest not wait so long. I say unto thee that this very day, when yonder sun now scorching above our heads is sinking in the west, and the shadows lie long from our crosses, and the people have gone to their homes, thou shalt be with Me, where the sun shall no more be thy light by day, nor the moon by night, but the Lord shall be thy everlasting light.

Thou shalt be with Me.—Dost thou ask only to be remembered; that I should give thee the glance of a thought; that I shall recall thy voice and face for a brief moment? Thou shalt be with Me, for I will await thee on the confines of My home. The throngs which escort Me shall behold thee by My side, and when I sit upon My sapphire throne I will give thee to sit beside Me, the one who, in My mortal anguish, trod the vale of the shadow, and who, with Me, shall tread the paths of light and glory.

In Paradise.—I am here regaining Paradise. All that was lost is being recovered. Within a few hours it will be Mine to give; within a few hours its key will be in My hand; within a few hours thou shalt walk with Me there in the cool of the day, and the angel that drove out Adam shall keep watch lest the Serpent enter to molest.

Verily, I say unto thee.—All this is fixed and certain. I say “verily” to thee because the Father hath said “verily” to Me. Oh, trembling soul, who hast fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before thee, thou mayest have strong encouragement from My Word and death.

Crucified, and the third day rise again.

Luke xxiv. 7.

THESE are the two poles of Christian life—Death and Resurrection. That which was true in the history of our Lord must have its counterpart in our own experiences. That Jesus died and rose again is not only the dual basis of justification, but it is the dual basis of sanctification. Did He die? Then we must arm ourselves with the same mind. The crucifixion was not finished on Calvary; it has continued through all ages, and will continue unto the end; not in its mediatorial and atoning aspect, but with the view of each man denying himself and taking up his cross to follow daily. So also we are perpetually leaving the things of time and sense where Christ left His grave-clothes, and are pressing up and on in the wake of His resurrection and ascension.

It is a solemn question, how far we are participating in this daily dying and daily rising. “Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed. Mortify your members which are upon the earth; seek those things which are above. If one died for all, then all died; that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.”

It is not that the old nature dies, but that we die to it. As a matter of experience and walk, the results will be very similar from either of these ways of stating the fact. But it is true to Scripture and experience also to speak of reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin—that is, the root-principle which so often fruits in sins. Reckon that the grave of Christ lies between thee and the solicitations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Deem thyself dead to thyself. All this, however, is only possible through the Holy Spirit.

Thou shalt see greater things than these.

John i. 50.

GOD'S dealings with us are always on an ascending scale. If we see clearly the lowest rung in the heavenly ladder, whilst we behold, the veil of mist will part, and we shall see the next above it, and then the next, and, in due order, the next; and so the steps that slope away through darkness up to God will always be beckoning to greater and yet greater things.

Have you known Christ as the Word? He is more; both Spirit and Life.

Has He become flesh? You shall behold Him glorified with the glory He had before the worlds.

Have you known Him as Alpha, before all? He is also Omega.

Have you met John? You shall meet One so much greater, that the latchet of His shoes the Baptist shall deem himself unworthy to unloose.

Do you know the baptism by water? You shall be baptized by fire.

Have you beheld the Lamb on the Cross? You shall behold Him in the midst of the throne.

Have you seen the Spirit descend as a dove on one head? You shall see Him come as a fire upon an unnumbered multitude.

Have you followed the Christ to the slight booth in the Jordan Valley? You shall enter with Him into mansions of eternal glory.

Do you acknowledge Him as King of Israel? You shall hear the acclamations that salute Him as King of the worlds.

Live up to all you know, and you shall know more. Be all you can, and you shall become more. Do all that your two talents permit, and you will find yourself ruler over four cities.

Thou hast kept the good wine until now.

John ii. 10.

THE world gives its best first. As youth and beauty are ushered into the banqueting-room of life, the world spreads the table with its best. The zest of enjoyment is keen in those young days, but it is soon satiated ; the delicacies with which the table is spread pall, and the appetite, unduly stimulated at the first, demands coarser and more passionate delights to stimulate. At last the table is served with provision, from which, in the first days, the banqueters would have turned away disgusted.

But if you let the King lead you into His banqueting house, beneath His banner of love you will find yourself feeding on dainties which never satiate nor pall—which whet the appetite and give the taste a more delicate appreciation of the vintages of heaven.

You may say this of the Word of God.—At the beginning of Christian life it is full of meaning and inspiration ; but as the years pass, and we realize ever more of its helpfulness, we repeat the refrain, “Thou hast kept the best until now !”

You may say this of Christian love.—Let two love in Christ, and instead of their affection waning, as so often happens in the world, they will discover that the fellowship, which began in comradeship, will end in a sacramental meal ; truest, purest, deepest enjoyment being kept for Paradise.

You may say it of heaven.—Neither hath eye seen nor heart conceived the things, even now and here, that God has prepared for those that love Him. But so soon as the redeemed spirit shall awaken in the uncreated glory of God’s presence, it will exclaim, “The half was never told ; Thou hast kept the best until now.” At every moment and always God is giving His best.

A man can receive nothing, except it have been given him from heaven. John iii. 27 (R. V.).

AFTER six months of marvellous ministry, in which the Baptist had seen the whole land at his feet, had gathered a band of disciples, and introduced the Messiah to the Jewish people, he found the crowds dwindling. His disciples viewed with feelings of chagrin the transference of popular interest from their master to Him of whom he had borne witness.

What John the Baptist meant by it.—He realized that the crowds, the hushed attention, the swift response, the power of speech, the message, the deep repentance, the office of morning star heralding the Dayspring from on high, had been the gift of God. He had nothing which he had not received; he would have received nothing, except God had given it to him. Whether these things went or came was a matter altogether beyond his control. His part was to receive and use what God gave; and then return to Him, at His bidding, the saved talent. This forbade alike pride and despondency.

What we may learn by it.—Humility and peace. *Humility.* Is this the time of your prosperity? Crowds wait on your words; mighty movements circle around you; glorious results follow on your plans! Do not be puffed up. Boast not yourself. "Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? but if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" *Peace.* If it is not due to your lethargy or sloth that the crowds have ebbed away, and that the tide of conversions has dropped below its former level, be at peace. These are things which the Holy Spirit worketh, dividing to each one severally even as He will.

If thou knewest the gift of God. . . .

John iv. 10.

THERE are wonderful contrasts here ! He who gives rest sits weary on the well-head ; He who was the Jews' Messiah utters His deepest lessons to a woman of Samaria ; He that gives living water asks for water from the dark, cool depths that lay beneath them.

God's best things are gifts.—Light, air, natural beauty, elasticity of the spirits, the sense of vigorous health, human love, and, above all, His only begotten and beloved Son. Among all other gifts is there one to be compared to this ? The living spring of eternal life, which Jesus opens up in our hearts, and which so greatly differs from the pit of outward ordinance, is an altogether unspeakable bestowment. Nothing can purchase it. If a man would give all the substance of his house for it, it would be utterly contemned. It must be received as a gift, or not at all.

God's gifts must be asked for.—"Thou wouldest have asked, and He would have given." This is the law of heaven. Prayer is a necessary link between the Divine hand that gives and the human heart that receives. We have not, because we ask not. There is nothing in our Lord's words of the dreamy and languid pietism which refuses to ask because it will not dictate to the perfect wisdom of God.

If we had fuller knowledge we should pray more.—"If thou knewest . . . thou wouldest ask." If thou knewest who He is that stands beside thee, in thy hours of private prayer—if thou knewest all the possibilities of the life of prayer—if thou knewest what gains would accrue to thee on thy knees, thou wouldest give thyself to prayer, as though it were the main object of thy life.

The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.

John v. 20.

HEAVEN stands open to me, my Lord, in these deep and holy words. Through the open door I see the source of the golden light that shone around Thy earthly life, and detect the secret of the music that ever sounded around Thy path, as the music of the golden bells when Aaron passed to and fro.

The Father loved Thee, not only because Thou wert His Son, dwelling in His bosom, but because Thou wert His obedient Servant. And I would inherit a similar love; not only the love of my adoption, but of service; for Thou saidst, "If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him."

The Father was ever showing Thee what He was doing in the unseen and eternal depths. Indeed, it seemed that Thou wert more occupied in beholding the things which were unseen than those which were seen. Thine eye was ever on the dial-plate of eternity, and Thine ear attent to the note of the tide on its shore. Thou didst nothing that was not in the pattern shown Thee on the mount of fellowship; but whatever was wrought there Thou didst here. Teach me to live like this.

Thy Father led Thee to ever greater works. First the daughter of Jairus, then Lazarus; first the Sermon on the Mount, then the prophecies of the closing days; first the Mountain of Transfiguration, then of Ascension. So would I be led forward, from Cana to Calvary; from Bethlehem to Bethany; from Jerusalem to the uttermost part of the world. Ever greater things, because with profounder humility and deeper insight into the meaning of Thy death. Deeper and therefore higher; nearer Thy cross, and therefore reaching further.

For Him the Father, even God, hath sealed.

John vi. 27 (R. V.).

THE seal is the mark of authentication. The Book of Esther often refers to the importance of the royal seal as giving validity and authenticity to documents to which it was appended. So at the waters of Jordan God authenticated our Lord ; first by the voice that spake from heaven, and secondly by the holy anointing that came upon His head, setting Him apart for holy service. What the Father did for His Son, He does for His sons. "He that stablisheth us with you into Christ, and anointed us, is God, who also sealed us." In other words, God waits to authenticate us to ourselves and to the world, as His beloved children, in whom He is well pleased.

The conditions of sealing.—In the case of our Lord there was entire subjection to the Father's will, although it involved His leaving the blessed home of Nazareth and identifying Himself with the sins and sorrows of men, by baptism in waters where they had confessed their sins. We, too, must be prepared to obey utterly, even to death.

The agent of sealing.—The Spirit descended and abode upon Him ; He was filled with the Spirit, and returned in His power to Galilee. We, too, are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise ; who stamps us with the die of our Saviour's image and superscription. Simultaneously with His gracious work *upon* us, we may detect His loving voice *within* us, witnessing with our spirits that we are children of God.

The effect of sealing.—Secrecy, safety, and assurance. *Secrecy*, Song of Sol. iv. 12. *Safety*, Matt. xxvii. 65, 66. *Assurance*, Rom. viii. 15, 16, 17. There is also a daily assimilation, though we know it not, to the glorious likeness of our Lord ; so that those who see us bear witness that His name is on us.

The Spirit was not given ; because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John vii. 39 (R. V.).

CALVARY must precede the Ascension, and both must come before Pentecost. The glorified Lord was the text on which the Spirit was to discourse, and the text must be complete before the sermon can commence. Moreover, it was only when our Lord had ascended to the right hand of the Father, that He could receive or transmit the Divine Comforter. It was needful for Him to be by the right hand of God exalted, before He could ask for and receive, and shed forth the Holy Spirit of promise. The one Paraclete must finish His work, and be withdrawn, ere the other could come to take up and finish His work on earth. The Son must sit down on the throne, or the Spirit could not descend to sit on each of the disciples.

But there is a deep inner lesson for us all in these words. We sometimes wonder why we have not received the Spirit, and why our lives are not channels through which He pours in mighty rivers to make desert hearts and lives blossom and sing. How gladly would we part with all beside, if we might be conscious that not tiny streamlets, not one river of holy influence merely, but that rivers were issuing from us as the waters from the temple threshold !

Is not the reason to be sought in our neglect to glorify Christ ? We have never yet abandoned ourselves to Him, content to live the branch-life, with no other aim than to realize the one purpose of His most blessed life, the glorifying of the Father. We have never seriously made it our life-purpose to glorify the Lord Jesus. There has been no triumphal entry into our hearts, no enthronization, no challenge to the gates of our soul that they should lift themselves up to admit the King of Glory.

If ye abide in My word.

John viii. 31 (R. V.).

1. *We shall be approved as Christ's disciples.*—"Then are ye truly My disciples." Of some the Master asks, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" And He drives these from Him, saying, "I never knew you." His words are the supreme test—the fire which detects the ore; the winnowing-fan that finds out the wheat. Our treatment of our Lord's words discriminates us: He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, is he that loveth Me.

2. *We shall know the truth.*—God teaches us differently from men. They deal in peradventures and surmises; He with certainties—"Ye shall know the truth." They talk about the truth; He gives us the thing itself, and we know because we possess. They deal with circumstances and externals; He with the heart and root of matters. They give to the mind and soul; He to the spirit. We know the truth, because the Truth is in us, and we are in the Truth. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true."

3. *We shall be free.*—"The truth shall make you free." Just as we are free from the terrors which belief in witchcraft and ghosts was wont to breed, because we know that the spirits of the dead do not haunt dark and dangerous places; just as we no longer fear the fatuous light over the marsh, or the death-tick, because science has attributed these to natural causes; so, as Jesus teaches us the truth about God, and the future, and the forgiveness of sins, and the broken power of Satan, and the impotence of death, we are delivered from the bondage of fear, and walk with God in perfect peace.

We must work the works of Him that sent Me.

John ix. 4 (R. v.).

IS not this exceedingly tender and beautiful? The Lord does not hesitate to describe Himself as specially designated to do a certain work. In every part of this Gospel He speaks of Himself as the sent One ; but He graciously conjoins His disciples and friends in it, saying, *We must work.* It is as though He said, “ I have a designated work which must needs be done ; but I cannot do it alone. We must do it, you and I, together.”

Fellowship with God the Father is the law of all industry.—Every crop that goldens in the summer wind is due to the summons of the God of Nature to the husbandman, “ Come and let us work together, thou and I.” Every achievement in factory or mill of textile fabrics is due to the combination of the Divine laws and the human agency. *We must work*, is God’s constant appeal.

Fellowship with the Son is the law of the Kingdom.—We have been called into the fellowship or partnership of the Son of God. He does not say, Go, but come ; not, Do this, but, Let us do it. He has set His heart on the glory of the Father, and He calls us to coöperate with Him in bringing back men to God. In some way we must contribute to the final result on which Christ has set His heart.

Fellowship with the Holy Spirit is the law of all successful service.—The closing words of the benediction that refer to the *communion* of the Holy Spirit are specially significant. “ We are witnesses, and so is also the Holy Ghost.” The *Spirit and the Bride* say Come. As Peter began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell. Oh for pure hands and a clean heart, that we may be worthy of this Divine confederacy !

John did no miracle ; but all things that John spake of this Man were true. John x. 41.

THIS is full of rare interest and beauty. John the Baptist had been dead some two years at least, and the memory of good men is apt quickly to pass from the mind of their contemporaries, especially when they are eclipsed by some greater successor. Who thinks of the morning star when the sun has risen ! But as the crowds came back again on the spot so closely identified with Christ's forerunner, he was recalled to mind ; and they used of him the words ascribed to them in our text.

Your life may be without miracle.—It may pass on with nothing to distinguish it above the lives of myriads around. There is no sensation-making note in your voice ; no extraordinary intellectual calibre in your mind ; no aptitude for wielding vast influence over the crowds. The years pass on with even monotony. Life is one dead level.

But mind you speak true words of Jesus Christ.—Point to Him and say, Behold the Lamb of God ! Say of Him, This is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. Announce Him as the Bridegroom, and be content to be the Bridegroom's friend. Say that He has His winnowing-fan and axe in hand. Be careless what men think of your accent, your gestures, your way of stating the truth ; but go on bearing witness to what you have known, tasted, and handled of the Word of Life.

After your death, your words may come to mind again, and be the means of bringing souls to the Lamb of God.—As corn-seeds, buried in mummy-cases, now bloom on English soil, so may words be carried in the memory through long years, and bear fruit after the speaker's death. What an epitaph for the grave of a Christian minister or teacher !

Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God? John xi. 40 (R.V).

YES, we shall see the glory of God. We shall see the graves give up their dead—not only at the last day, but now. Thousands around us are dead in trespasses and sins, in which they walk according to the course of this world. Alas! more than this, they stink in the putridity of their lives and speech. Around their graves gather their friends and relatives, bathed in tears, but unable to arrest the progress of decay. But, if we will believe, we shall see the glory of God.

But how shall *we* believe for this? It seems easy for some to believe. The Marys who sit at the Lord's feet, feeding on His words, find the life and light of faith in His beloved presence. But others, like Martha, are distracted with so many things, that faith seems impossible. And this is the very point where this story is so abundantly helpful. Jesus must have the coöperation and sympathy of some one's faith before this miracle could be wrought—and these He found, not in Mary, as we might have expected, but in Martha, the harassed housewife.

In educating Martha to this stupendous act of faith, (1) *The Lord gave her a distinct promise*: "Thy brother shall rise again." (2) *He drew her attention from His words to Himself*, who lay beneath and behind them: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." (3) *He forced her to confess her faith*. To express it would confirm and increase it: "Believest thou this?" (4) *He compelled her to act on the faith He had created*, by allowing the bystanders to remove the stone. All her soul woke up as she remarked these preparations for her brother's resurrection. She believed; and in her faith gave the Lord the pivot on which His leverage might rest.

Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone. John xii. 24 (R. V.).

THE East came to the cradle ; the West to the Cross. Sunrise becomes the Orient ; sunset the Occident wave. These were not Hellenist Jews, but pure-blooded Greeks, whose life and philosophy were in the present, in as much joy as nature, art, and amusement could yield. It was startling to be met with the grave announcement of death. But how wise to send them to read that earliest divine book of nature. Hear the parable of the corn of wheat.

Its loneliness.—Before sowing, it is by itself alone. It lies on the barn floor, beside myriads more, but there is no vital contact between it and them. They are just so many isolated units : as foreign to each other as the stars, between which millions of dividing miles intervene. So if you save your life, nursing it in selfishness, dreading and avoiding all that savors of self-denial and self-giving, you will be utterly and drearily lonely.

The falling into the ground to die.—If we compare ourselves to a corn of wheat, we may say that the seed-germ cannot bury itself ; but it can choose burial. It can be willing to be cast forth. It is not a pleasant experience for the little seed. As soon as it finds itself entombed, it is seized upon by chemical agents, which pierce and tear its delicate waterproof sheath, and eat their way to its vitals. Death is no child's-play.

The fruit-bearing.—Presently the rootlet shoots downward, the tiny frond upward, and, almost without knowing it, the stalk begins to blossom and bear fruit, which, with every sowing, reduplicates itself. Such may your life become, if you will let God have His way. *Via Crucis, via lucis* : the way of the cross is the way of light.

Thou canst not follow Me now ; but thou shalt follow afterward. John xiii. 36, 37 (R. V.).

HEAVEN desired.—We often say it. When the pressure of life seems unbearable ; when the door opens just wide enough to admit our dearest, and shuts before we can follow ; when we want to see Him whom we love—we find ourselves using Peter's words again : “ Why not now ? ”

Heaven delayed.—“ Thou canst not follow Me now.” The emphasis is on the *cannot*. It is as though the Master said, “ The hindrance is not in some arbitrary edict of Divine power, but in the infinite knowledge and wisdom that cannot err.” Peter was not fit to go. There were lessons of the utmost importance waiting for him to acquire in the near future. He must learn to know himself, and Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit. When he proudly vaunted that he would lay down his life for Jesus, he gave incontestable evidence that he did not know himself ; and there was every reason to think that he was similarly deceived when he supposed that he was fit to quit earth's discipline, and enter on heaven's blessed enjoyment. He must exchange his own strivings and resolvings for the gracious indwelling of the Spirit of Pentecost ; he must learn the glorious energy of the indwelling Saviour ; he must be girded by another, and carried whither he would not ; and only then would the time of his putting off of the tabernacle of the body arrive.

Heaven guaranteed.—“ Thou shalt follow afterward.” There could be no doubt about it, since Jesus had said it ; and often, in after days, these words must have been as a cordial, “ Thou shalt follow afterward.” But what the Master said to Peter He says to each who believes, *Thou shalt follow Me afterward*, “ unto fountains of waters of life.”

Believe also in Me.

John xiv. 1.

WERE we less familiar with these words, we should be more startled by their immeasurable meaning. One who seems a man asks all men to give Him precisely the same faith and confidence that they give to God. He would not abate His claims, though He was the humblest and meekest of men. And the irresistible conclusion is forced on us, that He was and knew Himself to be "God manifest in the flesh."

1. *Faith in Jesus is the cure of heart trouble.*—It is of little use to say, "Let not your heart be troubled," unless you can add "Trust Christ." Only if we can trust can we be still. Only if we can shift the responsibility of our life on the care of our never-failing Redeemer can weeping be exchanged for radiant and unspeakable joy.

2. *Faith in Jesus conducts to the knowledge of God.*—"Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." Philip said, "Show us the Father." Jesus answered, "Believe, and thou dost behold." The world says, Seeing is believing; Jesus says, Believing is seeing. The true way to know God is, not by arguing about or seeking to verify His existence by intellectual processes, but by obeying the precepts of Jesus; following the footsteps of Jesus; holding fellowship with Jesus.

3. *Faith in Jesus will make our lives the channel through which He can work.*—"He that believeth on Me, the works," etc. (vers. 12-14). The Gospels are included in the one clause; the Acts and all the marvels of the following ages in the other. Jesus is always the worker; and the man who yields himself most utterly to Him in obedience and faith, will become the channel through which He will work most mightily.

Abide in Me, and I in you.

John xv. 4.

THE *unity* between the Lord and His members is beautifully set forth in this exquisite parable ; which was perhaps suggested by the swaying of a vine in the evening air, as they essayed to go from the upper room toward Gethsemane. In certain conservatories the pliant branches are trained along roof or wall for vast distances ; yet one life pervades the whole plant, from the rugged root to the furthest twig and leaf and cluster. Thus there is one holy life pervading all who have belonged, or shall belong, to Jesus. They live because He lives. His life is theirs.

We are in Christ by grace ; but we need to realize and accentuate the union by meditation and prayer. Waiting more absolutely for His impulses in intercession and action. Being silent for Him to speak. Drawing on Him by the constant appeal of faith, which becomes as natural as breathing. Looking away to Him for His commendation. Seeking only His verdict on what may have been said and done. So closely joined to Him, that He may produce in and through us whatever fruit He will for the refreshment of men and the glory of God.

We are in Christ forever, so far as our standing is concerned ; but we may be "taken away," so far as our opportunities of ministry are concerned. How many of us have failed to be what He desired, so that He has had to bestow elsewhere the luxury of ministering to Him !

We are in Christ, not because we hold Him, but because He holds us ; therefore we must expect the Father's pruning. Yet do not dread the knife. It is His Word, wielded by a Father's hand ; and if we will yield to the golden pruning-knife of the Word, we shall escape the iron one of sorrow.

In that day.

John xvi. 23, 26.

THRICE in these closing words the Master refers to *that day* (see John xiv. 20). Without doubt He refers to the Day of Pentecost, and the era it would introduce.

The Holy Spirit reveals the relation between the Father and the Son (xiv. 20).—And this not as a matter of speculation merely, but for our holy living. The model of our union with Jesus is His union with the Father. As He is in His Father in perpetual and most blessed union, so are we to be in Him.

The Holy Spirit's presence answers our questions.—"Ye shall ask Me no question" (xvi. 23, R. v., *marg.*). Whilst the Lord was with them, they were constantly breaking in on Him with their questions: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" "Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom?" "When shall these things be?" This is always the symptom of the earliest stage of the religious life—perpetual questioning and worrying. But when the Spirit comes, His presence is the sufficient answer. He does not teach our intellects to know the truth, but gives the truth to our hearts. We need not question, because we see; we possess; we can taste and handle for ourselves.

The Holy Spirit's indwelling teaches us how to pray.—"In that day, ye shall ask in My name" (xvi. 26). To pray in Christ's name is to let His nature pray in and through our lips. Of course such prayer prevails. The one condition of successful prayer is to bring yourself into a line with the thoughts of God, to breathe His spirit, to be swayed by His impulses; this is only possible through the gracious operation of the Spirit of God. Has the blessed Day of Pentecost broken upon *you*? Do *you* live in its light? Have you received all it was meant to bring *you*?

Father, the hour is come ; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee. John xvii. 1 (R. V.).

IN one form or another we are constantly asking the Father to glorify us. Glorify me, O Father, we cry, by giving me the largest congregation in the town ; by commencing a great revival in my mission, by increasing my spiritual power, so that I shall be greatly sought after. Of course, we do not state our reasons quite so concisely ; but this is really what we mean. And then we wonder why the answer tarries. Is it not because our Father dare not trust us with glory ? He knows that we would become proud and self-conscious ; that we would ascribe our success to the strength of our arm and the swiftness of our foot. Nothing would be more harmful to our Christian growth. But when we desire glory only that we may be able better to glorify Jesus, then there will be no stint in what He will confer on us. Glory, like a golden river, will pour into our hearts and lives.

Oh for this absorbing passion for the glory of Jesus ! To be able to pray "Thy kingdom come," without reference to our share in securing its advent. To be as glad when another scores a great success, as though it had been ourselves who had won the laurels. To pray as eagerly for the success of others as of ourselves. Here is an ideal which seems inaccessible, as it ridicules all our natural attempts to win it. To be pleased to suffer, to fail, to be counted nothing and nobody, if only our dear Lord is extolled, exalted, and made very high—is this possible ?

Do you choose it ? Then be of good cheer. This is the hunger which God has promised to satisfy. He never shows you your lack of a grace without pledging Himself thereby to realize it for you. Yes, this blessed experience shall come even to you. *You* shall be taught the blessed lesson of perfect love.

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.
John xviii. 36.

WELL might Pilate ask if Jesus was a king. Thou poor, weary, rejected Nazarene, art Thou a king? A strange contrast, surely, to the Herod that built those halls of judgment! Thy people, at least, fail to recognize Thy royalty! But Jesus did not abate His claims. "Thou sayest that I am," He answered, "a king." And as the ages have passed they have substantiated His claim.

The origin of His kingdom.—"My kingdom is *not* of this world." The Lord did not mean, as His words have been too often interpreted, that His kingdom had nothing to do with this world; but that it did not originate here. The "of" means *out of*. Jesus is King, not by earthly descent, or human right, but by the purpose and counsel of the Father, who said, "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee: yet will I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."

The method of its promulgation. It is not spread by armed force. His servants do not fight. They are priests clad in the white robes of immaculate purity, and bearing aloft their banner with the inscription, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Like their Master, they bear witness to the truth; and as they do so those who are of the truth are attracted to the Lord as steel filings to the magnet.

There is true royalty in bearing witness to the Truth.—Humbly we may appropriate our Master's words: to this end were we born, and of this cause are we left in the world, that in every act and word we might bear witness to the Truth. As we do so, we manifest a royalty which is not of human gift or descent, but which has been communicated by the reception of the Christ-nature, through the regenerating grace of the Holy Ghost.

When Jesus had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished.

John xix. 30.

COMPARING the Gospels, we discover that these words were said "with a loud voice." It was the shout of a conqueror, who has fought through a long and terrible day, but greets victory as evening closes in.

Finished, the long line of sacrificial rite.—From the gates of Eden the blood of sacrifice had begun to flow, augmented by the confluent streams of the years. From that moment, however, not another drop need be shed. The types were finished now that the Antitype had been realized.

Finished, His fulfillment of prophecy.—How contradictory some had seemed! Ancient of Days, yet a babe; the Mighty God, yet marred of visage, and led to the slaughter; Son of Man, yet scion of David's stock; ruling in the midst of enemies, yet a bruised and broken Sufferer. But all of them, even to the last pathetic intimation of His dying thirst, fulfilled.

Finished, His mortal life.—Never again to be weary, hungered, tempted, buffeted, or to bear the contradiction of sinners. Never again to sweat the bloody sweat, or bear the accumulated faults of men. Nevermore to die.

Finished, a world's redemption.—He had wrought out and brought in a perfect salvation. The world, so far as God could make it so, was already reconciled. Sin was put away.

Finished, the perfect obedience.—He alone of all born of woman was able to say that there was nothing which the Father had asked that He had not given; nothing that the Father had imposed that He had not gladly borne. He had finished the work given Him to do.

Jesus saith unto her, Mary.

John xx. 16.

MANY had called her by that name. She had been wont to hear it many times a day from many lips; but only One had spoken it with that intonation. In His mouth its familiar syllables had a sweetness and tenderness which lingered in her heart; as the fragrance of the Roumanian rose-valley clings for many a day to the clothes of those who have entered it.

Her eyes had deceived her. Startled by the sudden glad expression which had passed over the features of the angels, who sat sentry in the sepulchre, she had turned herself back to see the source from which the radiance had gleamed; but even with that hint to help her, she had failed to recognize her Lord. But her ear could not mistake; the voice carried immediate recognition.

We sigh sometimes for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still"; but we shall hear those voices again. Our mortal body is to be fashioned according to the body of Christ's resurrection; and evidently in that body there were the old familiar tones. May we not, therefore, certainly infer that the voices which welcome us on the other side will be those that hushed us with their lullabies when we were babes: asked us for our love and assured us of theirs when we attained maturity; whispered their dying messages in our ears, and sent us their Godspeed as we went down into the river.

The Master knows our names, and calls His own followers by them. There is one response, which He waits to elicit—one which alone will satisfy Him; one in which the love and devotion of a life may be summed up. Like Mary, let us turn and say to Him: *Rabboni!* that is, *Master!*

That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. John xxi. 7 (R. V.).

THIS miracle was also a parable. When we go fishing apart from Jesus, we may indeed toil all the night and take nothing. But when through the darkness Jesus comes, and speaks to us across the wave, and tells us where to let down the nets; when we are in blessed partnership with Himself; when, though we see Him not, we obey His slightest promptings—then the nets are filled to their uttermost.

Those who are loved, love.—It was the consciousness that Jesus loved him which made John the Apostle of Love. Love casts such a wondrous spell over its objects, that they begin to shine in its rays and reflect them. Nothing will make a coal glow with heat but to plunge it into the heart of the fire. Do you want to love the Lord Jesus?—dwell on His love to you.

Those who love Christ see Him.—Not Peter, the man of eager action, but John, the man of devoted love, saw the Master amid the haze that lay on the lake shore. Love will penetrate every disguise; will detect Him by the slightest sign; will strip from our eyes the film that sense and sin draw over them. If you loved Him more, you would see His hand in that disappointment, that crushing sorrow.

Those who seek Christ cannot keep it to themselves.—They must tell it out to their next companion, with beating heart and thrilling speech. John said unto Peter, It is the Lord. How often has the affirmation of a pensive, quiet heart been the torch to ignite all the soul of another, who was more fitted to execute than plan. Is not this what we may all experience as we draw near to eternity? Shall we not see Jesus standing on the shore, with preparations beyond all thought, to welcome us as we arrive from the night cruise?

Ye shall be my witnesses.

Acts i. 8 (R. v.).

HOW different this function, entrusted to the apostles, to that assumed by the self-styled priests of our time, who claim the power to repeat the sacrifice of Calvary, and to absolve the penitent from his sins! The Master did not say that His followers were to become sacrificing priests, but witnesses to what He had done and would do.

Looking to Jesus is the condition of witness-bearing.—How else can we bear witness of Him? As we behold Him we shall reflect Him; and as we reflect Him we shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Lord the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 18, R. v.). It will not involve strenuous effort to witness to Jesus, if we are living in fellowship with Him. Light is self-revealing. In infinitesimal touches and expressions the light we are catching from Him will gleam forth, and men will unconsciously be led to believe in Him who has made us what we are.

Witness-bearing must spread through successive circles of influence—like the circling wavelets from a stone flung into the midst of a calm mountain lake. Some think they could witness in the uttermost ends of the earth, but they neglect the Jerusalem of the home. Those who begin here will be led almost unconsciously forward to the Judæa of their relatives, and the Samaria of their near neighborhood, and so to further boundary.

For witnessing we have supreme power.—If even your testimony is demanded, claim the power for the emergency. It is certainly at hand, and within reach. The hand of faith, the opened heart, may surely receive not a power, an attribute merely, but the Spirit, whose attribute of power certainly accompanies Him. Not *It*, but *He*.

He hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear.

Acts ii. 33 (R. V.).

WHAT a sublime commencement ! As Jacob's heart revived, and he was assured that Joseph lived when he saw the wagons that his sons had sent, so the heart of the Church revived when the Spirit came. It was the promised sign that the Master had reached the Father's throne, and was fulfilling the unforgotten promise that He would ask the Father for another Paraclete to fill his place, and abide until He should come again in glory.

It was as though, when the Son ascended on high, leading captivity captive, He passed through all heavens, till He came where no creature had ever come, or could come. There He prayed the Father, as He had said. It was as though He spoke thus : " Father, I have glorified Thee on the earth ; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

And the Father answered : " Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Ask of Me, . . . and I will give Thee."

It was as if He said : " Father, I ask nothing for Myself ; for all Thine are Mine, and Mine are Thine. But for others I ask that I may have the power of giving to My own the same anointing and power which Thou gavest Me when I stood on the threshold of My work. I was then filled with the Spirit ; grant unto Me the power to fill the hearts of all who believe with that same Spirit. It was in the power of that Spirit that I wrought, died, and rose ; let My Church be quickened and endued with the same sacred power."

And it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness of the Godhead should dwell, *bodily*. And the glorified body of Jesus became the reservoir of the Divine fullness, from which we all might receive.

Whom they laid daily at the door of the temple which is called Beautiful. *Acts iii. 2 (R. V.).*

IS not this thyself? Thou art of the Israel of God. There is no doubt of thy name being enrolled in the pedigree of elect and regenerate souls; but thou art lame, needing to be carried by the strong support of minister and friend; never able to leap, and walk, and praise God; and at the best only able to reach the outer side of the Beautiful Gate that conducts to the richest, gladdest life. Through that gate of entire consecration there come snatches of holy melody; glimpses of white-vestured souls; visions of ideals of life which thou hast not attained: but thou art excluded, condemned to live on the alms of those that enter. How great the pity! Why shouldest thou not have the very best that God can give?

But look up! expect to receive something; open thine ears to hear and thine heart to receive immediately strength, just where thou lackest it most sorely. The feet and ankle-bones of this helpless cripple only needed strength; they were perfectly formed, but paralyzed. Similarly thine ideals of Christian living are true and accurate, but thou art deficient in power. Thou must receive strength.

But this strength can only be had by union with the risen Lord. His name (that is, His nature) alone can make thee strong, and give thee perfect soundness in the presence of those who have hitherto only pitied thy weakness. Believe in Him! All that have ever risen up to obey His lead have had perfect health and strength. Open thine heart to receive them. Claim and appropriate the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Life which is in Christ Jesus shall make thee free from the law of sin and death, from weakness and failure.

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts iv. 31.

THEY had been filled on the Day of Pentecost, and Peter had been suddenly and mightily infilled for his encounter with the Sanhedrim (ver. 8); but here again they were all privileged, whilst in the attitude of prayer and praise, to be once more most blessedly infilled. From this we gather that we may claim repeated fillings of the Holy Spirit.

But let us remember that it is not necessary for the place to be shaken, or for the air to be filled with the outward phenomena of Pentecost as the necessary condition of this heavenly gift. Mr. Fletcher reminds us that the Lord may be pleased to come softly to our help. He may make an end of our corruption by helping us to sink gently to unknown depths of meekness. Like Naaman, we are full of prejudices. We expect that the Pentecostal gift will come to us with as much ado, pomp, and bustle, as the Syrian general looked for. But the blessed Paraclete often disconcerts all these preconceived notions. When we are looking for the hurricane, He comes as the zephyr. When we are expecting the torrent to pour into and fill the well, He fills it by single drops.

But the results will always be the same—great boldness in witness-bearing, much liberty in prayer and praise; great grace and beauty of character; self-denying love for those in need; great power through union with the risen Lord. If the second chapter of this book had been lost from the first MS. we must still have inferred something like the Pentecost. In no other way could we have accounted for the marvellous change which passed over the followers of Jesus, delivering them from the cowardice, wrangling, and prejudices of former days. Oh for a similar transforming experience for us all!

Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

Acts v. 4.

ACHAN, Belshazzar, and Ananias, met the same fate, because of their persistent use of devoted things. When once we have devoted aught to God, He counts it as His own, and strikes down the hand that would abase it to common and profane use. The Lord our God is a jealous God ; He will brook no perversion of His rights. Beware that you take back nothing which you have laid on God's altar, least of all yourself.

Each gathering of believers is endowed with mystic and extraordinary importance, because the Lord, through the Eternal Spirit, is literally present. The true President is not the minister, however distinguished by His gift or grace, but the Divine Spirit Himself ; and any sin against the Church is really against Him. It is this Divine presence that invests a gathering of the simplest, humblest believers with such unique importance. It is this which gives them the mysterious binding and loosing power, which is recognized and ratified in heaven. Behind Peter was the real Head of the Church ; and so with every faithful minister. Honor the Personality, the Presidency, and Deity of the Holy Spirit, as set forth in this narrative.

Dr. Gordon told me on one occasion that he had in his church a man who, like a very crooked stick, obstructed all its work. He spoke to him alone, and before his brethren ; but to no purpose. Then he bethought himself ; and remembered that not himself, nor his church officials, was the true Head of the Church, but Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. He therefore handed the whole matter over to the Divine Spirit, as the Executive of the Godhead. In a fortnight this man had left the city, and necessarily ceased the obstruction in which he had persisted.

We will give ourselves continually to prayer.

Acts vi. 4.

IF ever there was a sacred work, it was that of caring for these poor widows ; and yet the apostles felt that even such duties might interfere with the continual ministry of intercession. No doubt they always lived in the atmosphere and spirit of prayer, but they rightly felt that this was not enough either for them or their work. So they sought a division of labor, that while some specially served tables and ministered the alms of the church, others might be set free for steadfast continuance in prayer. This would keep the communication with the King on the throne clear and fresh, would draw down the power and blessing of the heavenly world, and be the means of procuring wisdom and strength for their great responsibilities.

There are many courses of usefulness open to each of us in this world, and we must choose the one, not only most suited to our idiosyncrasies, but in which we can best serve our day and generation. It may be that in our incessant activities we are neglecting the one method by which we may contribute most largely to the coming of our Father's kingdom. Notice that word *give*. It is as though the Spirit of prayer were seeking natures so pure, so devoted, that without hindrance He might form Himself into them. Give yourself to Him for this !

"In that day," said our Lord, speaking of the Day of Pentecost, *"ye shall ask in My name."* It is only when we are full of the Holy Spirit that we can experience the true power to plead with God, and use the name of Christ so effectively as to receive the richest blessings for ourselves and others. Much prayer, much blessing ; little prayer, little blessing ; no prayer, no blessing. *"The Word of God increased."*

Being full of the Holy Ghost.

Acts vii. 55.

THE blessed characteristic of Stephen lay in his being perpetually *full* of the Holy Ghost. It is said of others, even Peter, that they were *filled*, as though they needed some special and overmastering inducement for special service. But Stephen is more than once described as *full* (vi. 5), as though he were always kept brimming, like a lake from the hills.

Those who are full of the Holy Spirit are always looking steadfastly upwards.—They look not at the things which are seen, but at those which are not seen. Across the valleys, they catch sight of the Delectable Mountains, rising like the Himalaya above the plains of India. Whilst others look around for help, they lift up their eyes to the hills whence cometh their help; and to them heaven stands always open.

Those who are full of the Holy Spirit see and are transfigured by the glory of God.—What wonder that those who sat in the Council beheld Stephen's face, as it had been the face of an angel. The light that shone there was not as when Jesus was transfigured—in that case, the light of the Shechinah broke out from within—but here the glory of God shone from the open door of Heaven. - So the sunrise smites the highest peaks.

Those who are full of the Holy Ghost see the Lord Jesus, in His glory, as their Priest.—It is the special work of the Holy Spirit to direct the gaze to Jesus. Those who are full of the Spirit may hardly be aware of *His* gracious presence, but they are keenly alive to their Lord's. The Spirit takes of the things of Jesus, and reveals them to the loving and obedient; specially those that concern His priestly work on the cross and in heaven.

The same is desert.

Acts viii. 26 (R. V.).

DESERT means *uninhabited*. It seemed a strange providence that took Philip thither. He had been chosen to the honorable office of deacon, and there was probably plenty of work to do in connection with the scattered Church. Moreover, he had just completed a most successful mission in Samaria, where the multitude had given heed with one accord to the things he had spoken ; but now he was suddenly landed in these lonely solitudes, where only chance travellers could be encountered. Did he not count it strange, and wish to get home to his four little daughters (Acts xxi. 9) ?

There are many deserts in life ! The solitude of a new country, in which you do not know the language. The solitude of a sick-chamber, in which the earnest worker suddenly discovers the limitations of physical weakness. The solitude of suspicion and dislike, which contrast strangely with some large and devoted circle. Thither God brings us not infrequently. No flower can thrive in unbroken light.

But in every solitude, if we wait patiently on the Lord, there are opportunities of service. There is always some inquiring soul in need of the precise help we can give. There is an old story of some monks to whom the Book of Revelation was being read. At the end each was asked to choose the promise he loved best. One said I will take this, "God shall wipe away all tears." Another chose, "To him that overcometh I will give to sit on My throne." The third replied, "I would choose, 'His servants shall serve Him.' " This latter was Thomas à Kempis, who afterward wrote "The Imitation."

"Not caring how to serve Thee much,
But to please Thee perfectly."

The Church had peace, being edified; and . . . was multiplied. Acts ix. 31 (R. V.).

THE CHURCH grew not simply by addition, but by multiplication. Three added to three make *six*; three multiplied by three, *nine*. That is the Pentecostal ratio of increase. These are the conditions of Church growth:—

First, there must be peace.—Let us endeavor to *keep* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. As far as it lies in our power, let each of us live peaceably with all men. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away out of our hearts, with all malice, and let us be kind one to another, tender-hearted, and imitating God the great Peacemaker.

Next, the Church must be edified.—We must build ourselves up on our most holy faith. And, indeed, such growth in grace and the knowledge of God is almost inevitable where the Holy Ghost breaks up the reign of apathy and stagnation. When its foundations are deeply laid in righteousness and peace, the City of God arises into the pure air.

Moreover, the members of such a Christian community must walk *in the fear of the Lord*. To walk means the daily plodding, routine life—full of commonplaces, somewhat prosaic—but always ruled by the fear of grieving the heart that was pierced on Calvary. Lastly, we must walk *in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*, or, as the words might be rendered, in the *paracletism* of the Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate, Teacher, Guide; and we should habitually dwell in His radiant and helpful environment. What a difference there is between sea weeds and sea flowers expanding in their rock-surrounded aquariums, and the same when taken into common air! Such is the contrast wrought by the Spirit.

He lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner.

Acts x. 6.

THIS lodging must have been somewhat distasteful to the apostle ; not only because of its insalubrious odors, but because of the association with death that rendered him liable to the ceremonial pollution which a religious Jew, as Peter was, peculiarly dreaded. Probably he was only driven to it by the sternest necessity. But was it not remarkable that he who had been the chief apostle of the Church, and who had but recently come from a most successful tour, should suddenly be isolated from all his happy and holy associations, and be stranded for many days in the tanner's house (ix. 43) ?

Yet such dealings on the part of the Lord with His servant are easy of explanation. We are all apt to substitute work for God instead of communion with Him. We become strong in our own strength ; elated with success ; puffed up by the adulation of our friends. It is needful, therefore, that we be withdrawn from the madding crowd and the career of unbroken prosperity ; that the glare of the sun should be tempered, and confidence in ourselves be brought low. There is only one resort. To be hidden in the quiver ; to become dependent on the widow-woman of Zarephath ; to spend forty years in the desert, till the passionate impulses of our own life subside ; to go apart into Arabia ; to spend the slowly-moving weeks in the tanner's house.

Whilst Peter waited, he maintained his habits of prayer ; left his heart open to the impressions and teachings of the Holy Spirit ; awaited the next movements of the cloudy pillar ; set himself to acquire lessons which, though subversive of his past experience, reacted on his whole after-life ; and from his retirement went forth to unlock a new era.

He was a good man.

Acts xi. 24.

THIS is the Holy Spirit's verdict on the character and life of Barnabas. Very different to the magniloquent inscriptions on the tombs of warriors and statesmen ; but it were better to deserve this at the lips of the Master than to have the longest list of titles ever appended to a mortal's name. For a good man like this some would even dare to die. The characteristics of this good man were these :—

He could see the good in movements outside his own church-order.—The Church at Antioch originated, as this paragraph proves, in the preaching of a number of unknown, unordained refugees, who were fleeing from the iron hand of persecution. All we know of them is that they were men of Cyprus and Cyrene. They had broken through the barrier of the ages by preaching to the Gentiles, great numbers of whom had been saved. The Church in Jerusalem was somewhat suspicious of this new departure, and sent Barnabas to report ; but when he came he was forthwith convinced of its genuineness, saw the evidence of the hand of the Lord, and was glad. No jealousy, nor narrow bigotry, nor suspicion, warped his judgment.

He was willing that another should share with himself the joys of harvest.—He went off to Tarsus to seek his old acquaintance, and perhaps fellow-student, Paul, and for a whole year the two wrought side by side in loving fellowship, and taught much people.

He was eager that people should be added to the Lord.—Too often good men seek a following for themselves, and rejoice in those who are added to *their* church or organization. This is not the noblest style of work. It is better far to imitate the Baptist, who was content to be the Bridegroom's friend.

The Iron Gate.

Acts xii. 10.

THERE are iron gates before most of us. We are not specially anxious about the first or second ward, but ah, that iron gate ! The iron gate of supreme difficulty ; of a parent's prohibition against entering the mission-field ; of some obstinate circumstance which seems to forbid the execution of our plans ; of some barred and locked prohibition ; of death at the end of all. It may be that in his strange bewilderment, between waking and sleeping, Peter anticipated this iron gate with a good deal of dread. That at least would bar his progress ; but lo, it opened of its own accord ! So shall it be with many of the evils that we anticipate.

Not before we come to them, but at the moment of reaching them ; when heart and flesh threaten to fail—in the dim light we shall find them standing open, set back for us to pass. The tram-line is not cleared from end to end before the tram starts. Were the driver to wait for this, he would never start at all. But as he comes to each van, or drag, or carriage, it moves, and allows him a free course ; or, if it seems dilatory, his whistle hastens it. Thus, when we arise to follow the angel of God's purpose, who has suddenly entered the dark cell of our life, we shall discover that apparently insuperable difficulties, which we have long dreaded, shall open to us, and allow us to pass ; when we come to the object we have dreaded most, we shall find it gone.

Let there be plenty of prayer, "prayer without ceasing." Let there be prompt obedience to the angel's touch and summons ; the willingness to gird the relaxed loins, and follow ; and as you go through life, you will find yourself escorted by an invisible Companion, who holds the key to all doors.

Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Acts xiii. 2.

THE Holy Spirit, as the representative of the ascended Lord, is supreme in the Church. It is His sovereign voice that summons His chosen workers to undertake missionary or home enterprise. Dr. Ryland, who at first opposed Carey's idea of going to India, said afterward, "I believe God Himself infused into the mind of Carey that solicitude for the salvation of the heathen which cannot be fairly traced to any other source." And the same is true of all missionaries. The true call is always of the Divine Spirit. Whom He wills to call, He calls. Whom He calls, He separates. Whom He separates, He endows and sends forth.

But, Divine and absolute though the selection is, the Spirit seeks the concurrence of the Church. It was in answer to the Church's prayer for direction that the Spirit designated Barnabas and Saul for the great work of world-evangelization; and it was when the Church had fasted and prayed, and had offered these two to God as their wave-offering, that they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost. Thus the Spirit and the Bride coöperate.

In determining whether you have been called by the Holy Spirit to be a missionary, you must certainly call in the advice of Christian friends, and specially of the church with which you worship. If the Spirit of God is in you and them, they will ratify the movements of your heart. It is right, too, to consider whether you have been specially gifted and qualified for the work. In this also, the advice of the Church is most valuable. Of course, the Church herself must fast, *i. e.*, be separate from known evil and indulgence, that she may hear God's voice, and be able to advise her children.

Granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Acts xiv. 3 (R. V.).

THERE is no source of encouragement more fruitful of help than the co-witness and co-working of the Holy Spirit. Those who are filled with the Spirit are called into communion, *i. e.*, partnership, with Him in His work. Whilst they work from the outside, He works from within; whilst they sow the seed, He waters it abundantly. We must be very careful to be such in character and teaching that He may coöperate with us. Our hands must be very clean, if He, with an infinite condescension, is to grant signs and wonders to be wrought by them. But when we work with Him, and He with us, the results are beyond measure astonishing, and His alone.

“We are now seven years in this land,” wrote one of Gossner’s missionaries from the land of the Kohls in India; “but through these long years it was but trial of our patience and endurance. . . . Everything seemed to be in vain, and many said the mission was useless. Then the Lord Himself kindled a fire before our eyes; and it seized not only single souls, but spread from village to village; and from every side the question was borne to us, What shall we do? How shall we be saved? And I thought it was no more a heathen land I was in, but a Christian, and at home.”

Deus habet horas et moras, says the old proverb. God has His seasons and delays. We do not at once see the result of our sowings, toils, and tears; but we are conscious that our work is with our God—we know that we have our petitions, and we rejoice in hope. We must go on uttering “the word of His grace”—the grace that chooses such rebels to be His children; that cleanses them from sin; that restores and keeps and sanctifies.

They rehearsed.

Acts xv. 4, 12 (R. V.).

THERE is a difference between these two assertions. They are in exquisite harmony, but each contributes a different note. In the first we have the coöperation of the Holy Spirit with every faithful worker whom He sends forth ; so that, while the servant speaks to the outward ear, the Lord simultaneously addresses the heart. In the second, we have the work of the Holy Spirit wrought through a yielded life which has become His pure channel and mouth-piece. This is His twofold ministry.

His witness with us.—As we speak of Jesus crucified, risen, ascended, the blessed Spirit convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment. To every faithful word of testimony there is a deep resonant affirmation from this hidden but mighty Coöperant. If we say, “Behold the Lamb of God !” He adds, “He takes away the sin of the world.” If we say, “He died in weakness,” the Spirit adds, “He was raised in power.” If we say, “Repent and believe the Gospel,” He adds, “Now is the accepted time. The Holy Ghost saith To-day.” If the Bride says *Come*, the Spirit joins His voice to hers.

His witness through us.—“The word which ye hear,” said our Lord, “is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.” And that which was His glory may be ours also. We speak not of ourselves. This is the secret of a fruitful life—to be the yielded channel ; the cleansed vessel ; the bugle at the castle gate on which the King may sound His summons ; the lute on whose strings the Divine hand may play. Oh, be sure that the most lasting work in this world is only possible when we can say with Paul that we will not boast of anything save what Christ has wrought through us to make men obedient to the Gospel.

A certain woman named Lydia. . . . The Keeper of the prison. *Acts xvi. 14, 27.*

THESE are typical cases, put here in juxtaposition for the teaching and comfort of believers in every age. Each of them needed Christ, and each was brought into His true light; but each came in a different way. Lydia's heart opened as a flower beneath the touch of the sun, so gradually and imperceptibly that it was impossible to say the precise moment of her new life. The jailer came to Christ suddenly, startlingly, amid the crash of an earthquake. The one was drawn by love; the other driven by fear. A distinguished missionary says, "The Lord awakened me with a kiss"—it was so that Lydia's heart was won. Another tells us that the Lord sprang on him like a lion—it was thus with the jailer.

Lydia.—Do not always be looking out for signs and manifestations; for marked experiences. We do not notice the lines of longitude and latitude as we cross the ocean of life. Without knowing it, your character may be in the process of transfiguration. By insensible gradations the work of God may be proceeding in your heart. The tide is rising daily by tiny wavelets that appear to recede as fast as they advance. Do not measure progress by experience; only be yielded to God, and let Him do His will.

The Jailer.—Do not undervalue the influence of fear. There are some natures that never will be awakened unless they are startled by being brought face to face with the consequences of sin. If men will not come by the highest motives, be thankful that they come by any. Remember it is not belief about Christ, about His death or resurrection, but trust in Him as a living Person, that saves from the power and penalty of sin. "Believe *in* the Lord Jesus Christ." He is a living Person. Trust Him *now*.

It behoved the Christ to suffer.

Acts xvii. 3 (R. V.).

THIS is what our Lord was constantly insisting upon during the closing days of His earthly ministry. "Behoved it not," He asked, "the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?" The Jewish nation rejected Him because His conception of Messianic power was so foreign to theirs; but in doing so, doomed themselves to rejection from the purposes of God, at least during the present dispensation.

It behoved Him, *that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest*. How could He have sympathized with the anguish of human hearts, if He had not drunk deeply of the cup of sorrow? How could He have led His flock through the thorny brake, if He had not gone to and fro with His bare feet? In that He hath suffered, He is able to succor.

It behoved Him, *that He might be the sacrifice for sin*. The conscience demands that forgiveness should be consistent with righteousness. It was necessary, therefore, if Jesus was to bring us forgiveness, that He should be prepared to make reparation and atonement for sin. He must shed His blood, that He may cleanse His people from their sins: He must be willing to be their scape-goat; He must offer Himself without spot to God, that He may cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.

It behoved Him, *that He might reign forevermore*. It is a fundamental principle in God's universe, that suffering, humbly and resignedly borne, leads to royalty and reigning. He who can stoop most profoundly can rise to reign most gloriously. As is the descent, so is the ascent. In proportion to the submission to take the form of a servant is the exaltation to the right hand of power,

A certain Jew named Aquila, . . . with his wife Priscilla.

Acts xviii. 2.

IT is a striking spectacle to see Paul, on his entrance to Corinth, with which his name was to be so remarkably associated, looking around, probably in the Jewish quarter, for manual employment, that he might be sure of his bread. Similarity of craft introduced him to Aquila and his wife Priscilla, who had been recently expelled from Rome by the imperial edict. At this time they were in unbelief, but were apparently converted by the words the apostle addressed to them as they sat together over their daily toil.

How eager Paul was, not only to preach the Gospel to the crowds that thronged the gay and sunny streets of Corinth, but to win individual souls for his Master's kingdom. Some are eager enough in this holy quest, when they occupy the pulpit, and are conscious of many eyes being fixed upon them; but they are careless of the individual souls cast in their way. Not so was it with the Master, who went out of His way to find one Samaritan woman, and stopped beneath the tree to call down one publican. Not so was it with Philip, who spoke to the eunuch as eagerly as to Samaria. Not so was it with the apostle, who was as intense in his endeavors for a jailer, a Lydia, a Timothy, as for the crowds that were going to destruction.

Is not this God's secret test? If we are not careful about the ones and twos, He will not use us to the crowds. Indeed, it is the experience we obtain in dealing with individuals that equips us for multitudes. The way in which the kingdom of God comes ordinarily is, "One by one." How much might be done if each Christian workman would seek to win his neighbor!

Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed ?

Acts xix. 2 (R. V.).

THIS was Paul's first question of these twelve disciples. He knew perfectly well that they could not have believed without the special grace of the Holy Spirit ; but now he asked if at the moment of regeneration and conversion they received Him. Obviously, his question implied his belief that there was a special enduement of the Spirit of God for a consecrated and useful life over and above His initial work on the soul.

It is a question which is in these words addressed to every Christian reader. You have believed in Christ through the ministry of the Spirit ; but did you at that or any subsequent moment receive the infilling and unction of the Pentecostal Spirit ? You may not be able to point to some marked manifestation ; but are you conscious of those fruits which are the invariable accompaniments of that supreme gift ? If not, learn to receive, and receive now.

In how many instances might this inquiry be met by the reply which the apostle received : "Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was given." John the Baptist clearly foretold that Christ would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire ; but in his days Pentecost was still more than three years away, and these, His disciples, had never heard that the last days foretold by God had already been inaugurated. Alas that it should be possible after these centuries for many Christian people to be in ignorance of the special glory and characteristic of this age, and be content to live without seeking for themselves all that Pentecost means ! Ephesus was moved in every avenue of her corporate life, and the worship of Diana imperilled—and all because twelve men received the fullness of the Spirit.

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock.

Acts xx. 28 (R. V.).

THERE are many lessons in this verse.

(1) The Christian worker must not neglect his own soul. He must take heed to himself, as well as to the flock. Our temptation is to neglect our close walk with God in our eagerness to save others.

(2) The overseer, elder, or bishop, is not set over the flock, but is in it. Note the force of the Greek, as given in R. V. : the flock *in* the which they are made bishops. So to the end of life the most eminent of God's servants must remember that he is but a saved sinner, needing the blood and righteousness of Christ as much as the weakest of his flock ; and he also must lie down in green pastures, and be led beside still waters.

(3) The office of the minister is given by the Holy Ghost. It is He who lays on him the burden of souls, and equips him for his work. He, too, is willing to direct and use. How awful and solemn the responsibility ! Woe be to us if we exercise our ministry only for the eye and ear of our fellow-men !

(4) Notice that the Church is distinctly asserted to be God's. "Feed the Church of God." We are His people and the sheep of His pasture. His by choice, by purchase, by the drawing of the Holy Ghost. We must get a right understanding of this doctrine of the Church, that she had been taken out of the world to be God's peculiar possession and delight.

(5) The purchase money of the Church is here said to be God's own blood. It is a remarkable expression. It stands alone in the Word of God, but brings out very distinctly the thought that the entire Godhead achieved man's redemption in the offering of the Cross. We are dear to God, and must give Him the benefit of His great expenditure !

And kneeling down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each other farewell. *Acts xxi. 5 (R. V.).*

IT is thus that Christians say farewell. On their knees, within sound of the breaking wavelets, men, women, and children, gathered in a weeping circle around the servant of God, who had been to so many of them the apostle of a new life. There is no attitude more befitting than this, at times when the heart-strings are strained to cracking, and it seems as though the sacrifice were too great for trembling hands to place on the altar of God.

But it is thus that Christians never say farewell. The relationship which is founded in the love of God cannot be broken. Of such friendship there is no past or future, but always a blessed present tense. What has been, is, and will be. And as severed hearts meet in prayer, though the bodies may be divided by hundreds of miles of sea and land, there is no separation. They are one in the Father's presence, eternally, indissolubly, and blessedly one.

When we are called to part from those whom we love better than ourselves, let us kneel down and pray; let us abide alike in the attitude and exercise of unceasing intercession; let us realize that space and time are mere accidents of being, and not essential; let us be sure that they who are near the King must be near to all who, in heaven or on earth, are nearest Him also. For such there is "no more sea."

It is easier, for the most part, to go on board ship, than to turn home again. There are the interest and excitement of new scenes and people to divert the traveller. But how grey is the common landscape from which the light of the dear presence is withdrawn! God alone can comfort the bereaved.

The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know His will.

Acts xxii. 14 (R. V.).

THE will of God is general and particular. We may know it *generally* from the book of creation, the ten commandments, the beatitudes, and the conscience. But, in addition to this, God has a *particular* will for each of His children. The moon shines on the sea, but there is a special path of moonbeams to the spot where you stand, where you should be born, live, and die; what you should accomplish by your life; with what souls you should be brought into contact.

God comes still, as He did to Paul, with a great summons, calling His own from the midst of their fellows, and entrusting to them the sacred prerogative of knowing, seeing, and hearing. Happy are they who are prepared to arise at once, leave all, and follow. To them it will be given, as to Paul, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, so as to unfold them to others.

You have been *appointed* to know His will—be sure of this; and if as yet it is not clearly made known, adopt these precautions: (1) Carefully remove all your preconceptions and prejudices, so that your mind and heart can be a tablet for God to write on. (2) Set aside much time for waiting on God, in the study of His Holy Word. (3) Let the glory of Jesus be the supreme consideration with you. (4) Do not run to and fro, asking your friends and companions what they would recommend. (5) Wait the Lord's leisure, nor dare to act unless you are sure that you are in the line of His purpose. (6) Mark the trend of His providence, for it will certainly corroborate His inner voice. (7) When you have once made up your mind in faith and prayer, dare to act, and never look back. He will not let you be ashamed.

Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day. *Acts xxiii. 1 (R. V.).*

CONSCIENCE is what one knows with oneself. That at least is an exact translation of this Latin word. It is a man coming to himself, facing himself, looking deep into his own eyes as he stands before the mirror of God's truth. There are varieties of conscience—the *weak* conscience, which is ever questioning ; the *defiled* conscience, which has a consciousness of neglected duty or unforgiven sin ; the *morbid* conscience, which is perpetually discussing infinitesimal niceties, and splitting hairs. In contrast with these is the *good* conscience, of which the apostle speaks.

We have to live with our conscience, and if it is disquieted and restless, we find that it will make life almost unbearable. Like the restless sea, it frets and foams through the dark hours ; and is always casting up the bitter memories and sad regrets of bygone days. As it was with King Ahab, so it is with all who have sinned against conscience, they get the vineyard of Naboth ; but with it they get Elijah, standing like an incarnate conscience at the door, and taking pleasure and enjoyment from their possession.

Paul could not have made this statement unless he had been very accurate and careful in his daily walk and conversation ; but he tells us that he perpetually exercised himself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man. Let us subject ourselves to a similar discipline, and often expose ourselves to the searching scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, so that we may say with the apostle, "My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost" (Acts xxiv. 16 ; Rom. ix. 1).

It is a marvellous experience to *stand* before God ; but how much more so to *live* before Him !

After the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers. *Acts xxiv. 14 (R. V.).*

FOR want of a better term by which to set forth Christianity—whether by friend or foe is immaterial—the new principle which it represented was called the Way.

“Saul asked for letters to Damascus, that if he found any that were of *the Way*, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts ix. 2, R. v.). At Ephesus some were “disobedient, speaking evil of *the Way* before the multitude” (xix. 9). About that time there arose no small stir concerning *the Way*” (xix. 23). “Felix had more exact knowledge concerning *the Way*” (xxiv. 22). “I persecuted *this Way* unto the death” (xxii. 4).

It is a beautiful and significant phrase. Christ is Himself the Way. He has opened the way to God. Through the heavens He passed in His ascension, leaving behind Him at every step a way by which we may travel till every one of us appears in Zion before God. In Christ we have found the way to the Father, and have learned a rule of life. The word Methodist is closely akin to this. The followers of Wesley have been obeying on a new method which their illustrious founder opened.

“Men of the Way”; such is the designation by which Christians should be known. They are pilgrims and strangers, wayfarers, having no abiding city, but always passing on. We may say of them as the psalmist did of the pilgrim hosts that went up yearly to worship at the feast, “Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the highways to Zion” (Psa. lxxxiv. 5, R. v.). And is not this the Way that Isaiah spoke of when he said, “An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness” (Isa. xxxv. 8–10)?

One Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

Acts xxv. 19.

FESTUS talked lightly enough about Jesus. It was only a question in his mind of some Jewish superstition hardly worth debating. What did it matter to him or his imperial master whether Jesus were alive or dead? And was it not a fact that He was dead, crucified under Pontius Pilate? How little Festus realized the importance of that death, not to the Jews alone, but to himself! How little he understood that his own continued life was due to that death of which he spoke so lightly! Generations of luxury and years of self-indulgence had blunted his perception: as for all religious questions—they were mere superstition! And with respect to religious enthusiasm, as it appeared in Paul, he could find in his own history nothing that could account for or explain it.

Contrast with this sated worldling—a flatterer, an office-seeker, prepared to sell his soul for gold—the noble apostle whose character stands out in unsullied light. Though Christ had died, according to the Scriptures, he knew that He had risen, and was alive forevermore. His faith did not go back to the cross, but rose perpetually to the throne. He who was dead, was living forevermore; sharing His servant's sorrows, and supplying hourly grace for his every need.

He affirmed that He was alive. On the abundant testimony of those who had spoken with Him after His resurrection; on the strength of his own vision when Jesus had laid an arrest on him hard by Damascus; because of the mighty works that emanated from his hand; because of the daily fellowship which brought him into the presence of his Lord, in spite of clanking chain and iron bar—he affirmed that Jesus was alive.

I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.

Acts xxvi. 19.

TO us, also, the heavenly visions come. On our summer holidays, rising between us and some soaring Alp, or meeting us in our walk beside the gently-breaking sea; on beds of pain and in chambers of watching; visions of the risen Lord; visions of His infinite grief and pain which we have caused; visions of the possibilities of our life as a minister and witness of the things which we have seen; visions of results far down the vista wherein dark souls should become light, slaves emancipated, the defiled saintly. Ah, visions of God! ye leave an indelible impression that moulds and ennobles all after-years! Pitiably the soul to which visions of a holier, sweeter life never come, or, if they come, are never seen.

The one important matter is our treatment of them. We may indolently refuse to follow the beckoning hand and obey the voice that calls. We may return to our evil courses and follow the devices and desires of our own hearts. We may cling to the prison cell, instead of following the angel that strikes us on our side, and bids us go forth into freedom. And if so, like Balaam, we shall become spiritually blind, and fail to see visions that the dumb creatures recognize, and that would fain arrest us in our perilous career.

On the other hand, if we will obey the vision, we shall not only retain the impression, and feel its prolonged and enthralling power, but shall receive still further manifestations of the will of God. "A witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen Me, and of the things *wherein I will appear unto thee.*" To those who love and obey Him, He is ever drawing near with fresh and deeper thoughts of the Father.

*There stood by me this night an angel of God,
saying, fear not, Paul ! Acts xxvii. 23, 24.*

YES, the angels of God can find their way through the murkiest air, and alight on the most weather-beaten vessel that ever ploughed its difficult way through the stormy seas. Wheresoever thou art, O child of God, God's angels have their eyes fixed lovingly on thee; and in a moment, if it were God's will to give thee eyes, thou wouldest behold them.

“How oft do they their silver bowers leave,
To come to succor us that succor want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skyes, like flying pursuivant,
Against fowle feandes to ayd us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and dewly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant!
And all for love, and nothing for reward:
Oh, why should Heavenly God to men have such
regard?”

But if, like Paul, we would have the angel ministry, with their assurances against fear, like him we must be able to comply with two conditions—of being owned and being loyal.

Whose I am.—We are His by creation, by purchase, by consecration. That sentiment of being owned, which in the case of slaves is inimical to the highest development, is the elementary condition of our truest growth and well-being. We belong to One who is infinitely worthy. We cannot do as we would with ourselves. We may not take our own course.

Whom I serve.—The word rendered *serve* is the deepest and most expressive term that Paul could employ of the prostration of the soul at the feet of God. It is employed of the glorified, who *serve* Him day and night in His temple, and of whom it is said that His servants shall do Him *service*. The heavenly life begins here; and following its course, angels minister to us, and the stars in their courses fight for us.

And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, etc.

Acts xxviii. 30, 31 (R. V.).

THUS, abruptly, does this fifth Gospel close. It has been well said that a close so abrupt suggests a continuance and a sequel. The curtain of silence falls when Paul's life is not brought to a close, and his work at Rome is still in process; and does not this indicate the design of the Holy Spirit that we should believe that the book of the Acts of the Apostles is never complete, but is really conterminous with the present age? Thus, every generation of every life adds its own gold link to the chain, which reaches from the upper chamber in the earthly Jerusalem to the bridal chamber of the New Jerusalem, uniting in one glorious succession all in whom Jesus continues by the Spirit to speak and work.

When the late Bishop of Ripon read of the labors and sufferings of John Williams in the South Seas, he laid down the narrative, exclaiming, "This is the twenty-ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles." May we not rather say the five hundredth or five thousandth? Between the stories of Paul and of John Williams, you must insert thousands which have been recorded of God's remembrancing angels alone, as well as those which are filling our shelves with missionary romance and biography, more interesting than novels, more wonderful than dreams.

"The book is left incomplete, as it always will be while one believer is left to teach and preach those things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, and to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in His own flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church." And the question arises, Have you wrought or suffered for Jesus in such wise as to add some verses to those chapters, which are now being written by angel scribes?

Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.

Rom. i. 17.

IT is important to understand this verse, because it is the key to the Epistle. In the deepest sense, righteousness stands for two things—first, our standing before God ; and next, our personal character—our position and our condition—what we are in Jesus, and what we are in ourselves by the Holy Spirit. Hooker, therefore, well expresses the truth when he says, “ The righteousness with which we shall be clothed in the world to come, is both perfect and inherent ; that wherewith we are *justified* is perfect, but not inherent ; that by which we are *sanctified* is inherent, but not perfect.” The term righteousness, therefore, covers justification and sanctification, whereof the former is treated in the first five chapters of this Epistle ; and to this we confine ourselves.

There is a difference between *forgiveness* and *justification*. By forgiveness the sinner may be reinstated in the confidence of Him whom he has wronged ; by justification he is declared righteous according to law, and thereby commended to the confidence and respect of all men.

Justification is our position through the wonderful grace of God, and by virtue of the finished work of Christ, which is imputed to all who believe. All that He is, is reckoned to us who are in Him. We are not merely forgiven, great and wonderful as that act of love and grace would be ; but we are dealt with as though we had never sinned. Instead, therefore, of the law being against us, as we deserve, it is on our side, defending and protecting us. Our salvation actually rests on law. We may claim it as an absolute right. And all this because of God’s infinite grace : because, in the person of Jesus, He has perfectly met, and satisfied, the claims of His holy but broken law.

The law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith. Rom. ii. 15 (R. V.).

THIS is a great announcement, and shows how God can judge men who have never heard of the Bible or the Decalogue. The latter is engraven on their hearts, and is witnessed to by conscience.

Conscience is an original faculty. We are no more called upon to investigate its origin than the mathematician to inquire how the mind can add, or multiply, or divide; or than the artist to ask why we can appreciate the beautiful. It is part of the make-up and constitution of our moral nature. The word *ought* lies behind conscience, investing it with the certainty and irresistibleness of the throne of God.

Conscience is the judgment-seat of God set up within our nature. You may always know when conscience speaks. She never hesitates, or questions, or pronounces on the expediency of a course; but, as any case is presented to her, she pronounces absolutely and directly upon it as right or wrong. And as she speaks, she anticipates the verdict of the great white throne.

Doubtless conscience may be impaired in its action by long neglect, or by the determined preference of human maxims as our rule of action; but it is always liable to resurrection when the voice of God is sounding. The office of the minister, like "Old Mortality" in the story, is to go through the world, chisel in hand, clearing the inscriptions of the law from the grit of growth which has rendered them almost illegible in too many cases. The Prince, in the old fairy story, sounded a blast at the gate of the Sleeping Palace, and broke the spell, so that all its inmates sprang up into alert vitality; and similarly the Spirit of God, through the Truth, appeals to the human conscience, which is His ally in the heart of man.

That He might be just, and the Justifier.

Rom. iii. 26.

THIS verse is often quoted as though the word *yet* must be inserted to bring out its meaning. "Just, and *yet* the Justifier." The marvel of a just God justifying sinful men is thus strongly accentuated. Of course, this is a true thought and marvellous. But it is not the precise idea of the apostle, when he says that the just God is the Justifier of those that have faith in Jesus. He means that the very justice of God has come on our side, and that His love may have its unhindered way, not only consistently with His justice, but because of it.

This is the *heart* of the Gospel. Jesus has stood as our representative. He has borne our sin, in its curse and penalty; has met the claims of a broken law, and satisfied the demands of infinite righteousness. To have done this in our name and on our behalf not only makes us free from any penalty which might otherwise have accrued, but gives us a claim—the claim of the righteous—on all those blessings which the righteous government of God has to bestow.

Directly we become one with Jesus by a living faith, we stand possessed of all that He has done and is. In Him we have already suffered all that the holy law of God could demand as the just penalty of our sins. In Him we have laid in the grave, paying the uttermost farthing that could be exacted. In Him we have been liberated from the prison-house, and have passed into the presence and welcome of God. We may claim, therefore, that the law of God should make for us, as once it made against us. We are saved not only by the grace, but by the justice of God. He is faithful to His Son and just to the law, when He forgives us our sins.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.

Rom. iv. 20.

IT was a marvellous promise that this childless pair should have a child, and become progenitors of a great nation, so that the stars of the heavenly vault and the sand-grains on the ocean-shore should not be more numerous. And it was enough to stagger any man to be told of it. But Abraham staggered not. How was this?

It did not arise from ignoring the difficulties that obstructed its realization.—He might have done so. Whenever the natural obstacles arose in his mind, he might have ignored them. But this, according to the R. v. rendering of the previous verse, was not Abraham's policy. He quietly and deliberately considered the enormous difficulties that lay in the path of the Divine purpose, and in spite of them "he staggered not."

But his unstaggering faith arose from his great thoughts of Him who had promised.—He kept saying to himself, *He is able, He is able.* He knew that God would not have said what He could not perform. He knew that the God of nature was Lord of the nature He had made. He knew that no word of the Almighty could be destitute of power. He fed his faith by cherishing lofty and profound thoughts of God's infinite resources. There rang in his heart the assurance, *I am El Shaddai.*

It is remarkable that, throughout Abraham's life, God was continually giving new glimpses into His own glorious nature. With every temptation, call to obedience, or demand for sacrifice, a new and deeper revelation was entwined. This fed his faith, and gave it unstaggering strength. Child of God, feed thy faith on Promise. For every look at your difficulties, take ten at what thy God is.

They which receive abundance of grace . . . shall reign in life.

Rom. v. 17.

ALL God's dealings with us are on the same principle. *As* we received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* we must walk in Him. Whether it be justification or sanctification; whether reconciliation or reigning in life that is under consideration—the same mighty principles underlie and control the Divine gifts and our participation in them. We *receive* reconciliation as a gift at the beginning of our Christian life, and we have to *receive* all else by the same medium to the end. Forever and forever we have just to wait till God fill us, as the flower-cups that are now filled with sunshine and now with dew or rain.

You have already received the reconciliation (ver. 11).—Unable to earn it by your own endeavors, you were at last content to receive it as a free gift placed into your open hand; now you have to maintain the same position with respect to all the spiritual gifts that you need for the maintenance of a godly life, and to enable you to reign. Faith—simple, open-handed, heaven-regarding faith—is the one unchanging law of the holy life.

“Trusting Jesus, that is *all*.”

This reigning in life is not to be relegated to the unseen and future.—It is meant to be our present experience. He hath made us kings to God, even the Father. We are called to the royalty of men, the abundance, the freedom, the consciousness of power and victory, which we are wont to associate with those who reign. To reign in the ordinary life of the home, the shop, the counting-house—such is our high calling in Christ Jesus. And it may be ours if we receive “abundance of grace” of the one Man, Jesus Christ.

Present yourselves unto God.

Rom. vi. 13 (R. V.).

WE must choose. On the one hand stands sin, filling the market-place with its appeals, and bidding for us; on the other hand, God in the person of His Son. For it is well known that to whomsoever we yield ourselves to obey, his servants we shall be. Sin wants us, not only to work its fell results by us, but to curse and ruin us; whilst God wants to bless us with eternal life.

We may not be able to forecast or to arrange many things in our lives, which are difficult and perplexing; and at first it is not wise to discuss our attitude or action with respect to them. The first and most momentous question which presses for immediate solution is, whether we are prepared to present our members—brain, voice, hand, heart—to God; that through them He may fulfill His good purpose.

The argument is a very cogent one. The apostle tells us that we have been delivered from death; that in Jesus Christ we have been brought back to stand on the resurrection side of the grave. For such a wondrous deliverance, he exclaims, there is only one adequate return. Present yourselves to be the slaves of your Redeemer. Surely none of us would resemble the rich man, who was saved from drowning by a brave sailor, and offered him half-a-crown in recompense!

In this way also we shall be delivered from sin. Merely to resist and refuse it, is not enough; we shall not get perfect freedom so. But if we turn to God with a full purpose of heart, and give Him possession, we shall be delivered from the dominion of evil, because the responsibility of our emancipation and perfecting will rest on Him to whom we have yielded spirit, soul, and body.

O wretched man that I am !

Rom. vii. 24.

THIS chapter is very full of the personal pronoun. *Me* and *I* are the pivot around which its argument revolves. The strenuous efforts which the soul makes, not so much to justify as to sanctify itself, to realize its ideal, to walk worthy of the Lord, are well-pleasing, and are described by a master hand.

Is there one of us who has not read these words repeatedly, and in desperation? They have been so exactly true. We have longed with passionate sincerity that a new man might arise in us to free us from our old man, and make us the men we fain would be. We have been conscious of a subtle force mastering our struggles, like the serpents overcoming Laocoon and his sons; we have realized that a corrupting carcase was bound to our backs, as to the Roman criminals of old, filling the air with miasma, and poisoning our life. We have cried bitterly, O wretched man, who shall deliver?

The key to the plaintive moan of this chapter consists in this. It is the result of the endeavor to live a holy life apart from the power of the indwelling Saviour, and independently of the grace of the Holy Spirit. All such efforts are sure to end in wretchedness. We can no more sanctify ourselves than we can justify. Deliverance from the power of sin is the gift of God's grace, as forgiveness is. And it is only when we have come to the very end of all our strivings and resolvings, and have abandoned ourselves to the Saviour, that He should do in us and for us what we cannot do for ourselves, that we are led to cry, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"All things are possible to God;
To Christ, the power of God in men,
To me, when I am all subdued,
When I, in Christ, am born again."

The Spirit Himself maketh intercession with groanings.

Rom. viii. 26 (R. V.).

THERE is a threefold groaning here.

Creation groans (22).—The sufferings of the dumb animals, under the brutal tyranny of man ; in hard service ; in the torture chambers of vivisectionists ; to yield pleasure ; to give food ; or to provide dress—must fill the ear of Heaven with groans. The sighs of myriads of acres, condemned to bear the poisonous poppy or the barley for the manufacture of spirit, must be heard across the broad expanse of space. There is a discord, an oppression, a vanity in the universe around us, which constantly betrays the secret oppression of evil. Goethe said that Nature seemed to him to be like a captive maiden crying aloud for release.

The saints groan (23).—We wait for our adoption, for the manifestation of our sonship, for the redemption of our bodies from the last remnants of the fall ; and as we wait, we groan beneath the pressure of the present, the weight of mortality, and with eager desire for the blessed advent of the Lord.

The Spirit groans (26).—The pressure of sin and sorrow in our world is heavy for Him to bear, and He sighs bitterly, as Jesus did when He stood face to face with the grave of His dead friend.

But these groans portend life, not death. They are full of hope, not despair. They are the pangs of birth, not the throes of death. Out of the agony of the present the new heavens and earth are being born.

“Unto you is given
To watch for the coming of His feet
Who is the glory of our blessed Heaven.
The work and watching will be very sweet,
Even in an earthly home ;
And in such an hour as you think not
He will come.”

Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.

Rom. ix. 13 (R. V.).

THE apostle is dealing here, not with individuals as such, but with peoples and nations. For instance, Isaac stands for the entire Jewish race—Abraham's seed (ver. 7). He is dealing with the question, why it was that God chose Israel and rejected Edom; chose Jacob and rejected Esau: and he shows that the ultimate decision of their destinies lay in the purpose of God, according to election. The one was elect to be a channel of immense blessing to the world; whilst the other was rejected.

But we must always associate the Divine foreknowledge with the Divine choice. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate." We must regard Jacob and Esau, not as individual personalities merely, but as the founders of nations. For God's purpose in the building-up of the chosen people, Jacob the methodical and far-seeing, was more suited than Esau the free-lance, the rover, the child of impulse and passion. And, besides, there were religious aptitudes and capacities within him, of which Esau gave no sign or trace. This does not solve the entire mystery, perhaps; but only casts it a degree or two further back. Still, it ought to be considered. Like a candle, it casts a slender ray on to the black abyss. In any case, is it not certain that God's choice did alight on him who was most suited to serve the Divine purpose?

It may be that God is wanting to execute His purpose through you. Take heed. Still the savory dish steams on the desert air, and appeals to the appetite of our natures; and we are strongly tempted to forego the unseen and eternal for a moment's gratification. See to it that for one morsel of meat you do not sell your birth-right.

If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, etc.

Rom. x. 9 (R. V.).

SALVATION here is evidently to be taken in its most extended meaning. It stands even more for the deliverance of the soul from the love and dominion of sin than for the removal of its justly-incurred penalty. That we should be pure in heart, holy in thought, consecrated in life, with all the range of our nature controlled by His indwelling Spirit—such is the Divine intention with respect to us, as suggested by this deep, great word *Salvation*. But there are two conditions, on our compliance with which this saving power is realized.

We must confess Jesus as Lord.—Throughout Scripture there is a close connection between Christ's Royalty and His Saviourship. "Behold, thy King cometh to thee, . . . having salvation ;" "Him hath God set forth to be a Prince and a Saviour." "Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, . . . made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." We shall never know Christ as a Saviour from inbred sin until we have definitely and absolutely enthroned Him in our hearts. A physician is not content with healing outbreaks of disease and fever when they occur ; but claims leave to examine all the arrangements of the house, so as to deal with the sources of the mischief.

We must also steadfastly believe in the Resurrection.—The risen Lord, sitting at the right hand of God, in all the vigor of an indissoluble life : still working in the world, and energizing the hearts of His own : entering to indwell, to fill, to unite with His own eternal life—such is the vision offered to our faith. Let us look away to Him with a persistent, unwavering gaze, until sin ceases to attract us, and Satan finds a Stronger in possession.

Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.
Rom. xi. 36.

THIS verse reminds us of those lagoons of perfectly still clear water, of which travellers tell. So clear, that it is easily possible to look into their translucent depths to where the submarine foliage waves ! So deep, that the ordinary measuring line fails to plumb them ! All these words are monosyllables. A child just learning to read could easily spell them out. But who shall exhaust their meaning ?

Of Him.—The entire scheme of redemption ; the marvellous history of the chosen people, with which this chapter is occupied ; the universe of matter, *all* are included in the *all things* that have emanated *out of* God. No one has been His counsellor, or given aught to Him. From all created things, which are as the stream, let us climb to Him, who is their fountain, source, and origin ; and in Him let us learn to fill our own souls to the very brim.

Through Him.—Through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, God has poured the entire grace and wealth of His nature to bless and help us. There is no good thing that does not come to us through the mediation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Through Him He made the worlds. Through Him we have received the reconciliation. Through Him, also, all grace is made to abound toward us. Never forget to magnify the Lord Jesus as the source of all your supply.

To Him.—Creation, Providence, Redemption, are all tending back to God. The tide is setting in toward the throne. A revenue of glory shall yet accrue from all that has happened within the parenthesis of time. Every whit in the great temple shall one day say “Glory !”

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.

Rom. xii. 1.

TO *present* carries us back to chapter vi. We might almost say that the intervening chapters, after the manner of the apostle, are one prolonged digression or parenthesis, and that he classes all the great things with which he has been treating as among the mercies of God, and as reasons for our entire consecration. Every disclosure of God's grace toward us is an argument for our complete surrender to His will and power.

We are called on to present *our bodies* as instruments of righteousness, because all true regimen of the inner life immediately affects the body in all its members; and, conversely, the consecration of the body reacts upon and affects the temper of the soul. It would be well for you to take Miss Havergal's hymn, with its enumeration of the various parts of the body, and offer and present yourself, to be from this day and forward, wholly for God. Only believe that He is more anxious for this than words can tell, because He loves you so, and that He accepts immediately what you offer.

Such consecration must be *living*; that is, it must enter into all our life, being holy, well-pleasing to God, and rational. It is not only *reasonable* when we consider the relation we sustain to Him, but it should engage all our intelligence and reasoning faculties. And when it is made, and the soul is becoming duly transfigured in its exercise, we begin to prove that God's will, which once we dreaded, is also good, well-pleasing, and perfect. When we look at God's will from a distance, and before consecration, it seems impossible. It is only when we begin to obey, that we can say:

"Thou sweet beloved will of God."

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. xiii. 14.

THIS verse is ever memorable from its association with the life of Augustine, who says: "Thus was I sick and tormented in mind, bitterly accusing myself, and rolling and turning about in my chain, till it might be wholly broken."

At length, rushing into the garden, groaning in spirit, "all my bones were crying out, soul-sick was I and grievously tormented. I said to myself, 'Be it done now; be it done now.' And a voice said, 'Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him. Fear not; He will not withdraw Himself, to let thee fall. He will receive, and will heal thee. Stop thine ears against those unclean members of thine, which are upon the earth, that they may be mortified.'"

Then arose a mighty tempest, bringing a heavy downpour of tears. "I cast myself under a certain fig-tree, and gave rein to my tears, and the floods of mine eyes brake forth. Why not now? Why not this hour make an end of my uncleanness? And, lo! from the neighboring house I heard a voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, singing and oft repeating, 'Take and read; take and read!' Checking the torrent of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be a Divine command to open the Book and read the first chapter I could find. I seized; I opened, and in silence read the passage on which mine eyes fell: 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.' No further would I read; nor was there need, for instantly all my heart was flooded with a light of peace, all the sadness of doubt melted away!"

He that herein serveth Christ is well-pleasing to God, and approved of men. Rom. xiv. 18 (R. V.).

DEAN HOWSON renders this verse thus: "He who lives in these things as Christ's bondsman is well-pleasing to God, and cannot be condemned by men." There are two rules, therefore, to be observed by us when we consider our behavior in that great border-land which lies between the dark and light, the clearly wrong and clearly right. We are all conscious of habits and tastes, of inclinations toward certain forms of amusement and recreation, of methods of life, which do not contravene any distinct law of God, but are certainly open to question. It is such things that fall within the scope of these two principles.

First, we must always remember that we are Christ's bondservants.—Let us look then, every day and hour, and as to the mental *habit*, every moment, upon Jesus Christ as our Master. Sainly George Herbert chose that to be, as it were, his best-beloved aspect of his Saviour; "My Master, Jesus." "An oriental fragrancy, my Master." Let us do the same. Let us wear the word next the heart, next the will; nay, let it sink into the very springs of both, deeper every day. And as each fresh question arises in our life, let us stand close besides Him, noticing the expression of His face, asking Him what He would desire, and always reckoning that the least suggestion of His preference is law. "None of us liveth to himself: for, whether we live, we live unto the Lord."

Second, we must always bear in mind the spiritual life of others.—We are to put no stumbling-block, or occasion for falling, in another's way. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor to do any other thing, whereby our brother is made to stumble. Let us each of us please his neighbor for good ends, to build him up; for Christ pleased not Himself.

I will not dare to speak of any things save those that Christ wrought through me.

Rom. xv. 18 (R. V.).

ALL things that have not sprung from the indwelling and inworking power of Christ, are probably valueless in the sight of God. As the apostle dared not record them in this book, so probably they are not recorded in God's book. They lack the one principle or germ of life. Our Lord said, Separate from Me ye can do nothing; and probably, therefore, whatever we do out of living union with Him amounts to nothing.

These words are a window into the apostle's inner life. He was ever looking to the Lord to work through him, in the power of the Holy Ghost. He had nothing, therefore, to boast of, as he reviewed his labors; the impulse in which they originated, and the success with which they were crowned, were alike attributable to the Son of God, who had been revealed and formed within.

Let us so yield ourselves to Him, that the great Master may fulfill through us also all the good pleasure of His will.

Let us wait before Him in earnest expectancy, till the foundation of His purpose begins to arise within us; and let us receive from Him the gracious power of which to realize His plans. "I cannot," one may say, "give that tract; speak to that fellow-traveller; witness for Christ on that ship or in that shop; stand up in that pulpit and preach." No, perhaps not. But you can let Christ do these things through you.

"So others shall
Take patience, labor, to their heart and land,
From thy land and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.

The least flower with a brimming cup may stand
And share its dewdrop with another near."

Quartus the brother.

Rom. xvi. 23 (R. V.).

THAT is all we know about him. The others whose names are written here are more or less famous. Tertius wrote the Epistle; Gaius was evidently a man of influence; Erastus was the treasurer of the city, and so on. But Quartus was just a humble, simple Christian, who had no handle to his name, save his brotherliness and his desire to assure his Roman brethren, whom probably he had never seen, of his love to them. "So he begs a little corner in Paul's letter, and gets it; and there, in his little niche, like some statue of a forgotten saint scarce seen amidst the glories of a great cathedral, 'Quartus the brother' stands to all time."

What a lesson in humility! Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not. Be content to live and die unknown, except for the love that breathes through thy life, not to those of thine own circle merely, but for those across the sea, with whom thou wouldst fain strike hands. Thy one joy, that thou hast been born into the family of God. Thy creed, that all regenerate souls, of every name and sect, are members of the same family, children of the same Father, and therefore one in ties of peculiar tenderness and strength.

What a revelation this slight reference is to the new binding forces of the Gospel! At the Advent the world was split by great gulfs of national hatred; fierce enmities of race, language, and religion; wide separations far profounder than anything that we know. And then the Gospel came, which began to gather men of every race into one family, in Jesus Christ, the Divine Elder-brother; and from this, uniting influences of brotherhood began to permeate the world.

Called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Cor. i. 9.

THE word for *fellowship* is the same that is employed in Luke v. 10, of James and John being *partners* with Simon. We have been called into partnership with the Son of God, in His redemptive purposes, His love and tears for men, and ultimately in His triumph and glory. He has entered into partnership with man, and we are now summoned into partnership with Him through the communion of the Holy Ghost. In the words of the apostle, "our fellowship [or partnership] is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

How fruitful of comfort is the thought that Christ's interests are ours, and that we are at liberty to draw upon His resources to the uttermost. Suppose a poor clerk were to be summoned from his desk into the counting-house of a Rothschild, and informed that from that moment he was taken into partnership with the firm: would it not be less of an honor than this which has fallen to our lot? Association with millionaires in money-making were infinitely less desirable than association with the Son of God in world-saving. And would that poor clerk feel any anxiety as to his share in meeting the immense liabilities of the concern? However great they might be, he would know that the resources of the firm were adequate, and he would be able to sleep easily at night, though millions were due on the morrow. Child of God, cannot thy Father meet all His Son's engagements?

The call to this partnership is from the Father. It is He who has chosen us for this high honor of coöperating with His Son. Will He have led us into such an association, and leave us to be overwhelmed by the difficulties of the situation He has created? It cannot be! He will supply all our need.

God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.
1 Cor. ii. 10.

EYES of my soul, ye have no need to wait until the vail of the flesh that screens off the beatific vision has been rent in twain by the mighty hands of the Angel of Death, ere ye behold the land that floweth with milk and honey !

Ears of my heart, ye need not remain dull and listless till the peal of the archangel's trumpet thrill you, and summon you to the music of the harpers harping on their harps or the chime of the glassy sea.

Heart of mine, be expectant ! Awake ! Lo, there shall come into thee, penetrating, pervading, filling thy every recess, all those blessed things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. They shall enter thee, as a retinue of knights might enter a beleaguered castle to make it strong against any possible combination of the foe.

Only I must *love* God. Through Isaiah I am taught that I must *wait* for Him (Isa. lxiv. 4) ; here I learn that I must *love*. For love is quick to know. He that loveth knoweth God. It was the apostle whom Jesus loved that beheld Him on the margin of the lake. It is to the warm, tender atmosphere of loving hearts that the unchecked, ungrieved Spirit unfolds His secrets. Let me, therefore, bathe myself in the gracious atmosphere of my Saviour's presence, never going outside its genial glow, never falling behind His going forth, until I am entrusted, through the Spirit, with the deep things of God.

“ God only knows the love of God ;
Oh that it now were shed abroad
In this poor stony heart !
For love I sigh, for love I pine,
This only portion, Lord, be mine—
Be mine this better part ! ”

Let every man take heed how he buildeth.

1 Cor. iii. 10.

A FITTING illustration of the Christian life for the people of Corinth, famed for its architecture. We are all builders, whether we choose or not ! We may be temple-builders ! Each heart, each life, each character, may become a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Every act we do, every word we utter, the way in which we spend any moments of our time, is either a fragment of gold, silver, and precious stones, or of wood, hay, and stubble, built into the rising structure of the erection entrusted to our skill and pains. It does not so much matter *what* we do, but *how* we do it. Every time we perform any action with the best motives and spirit, we deposit a tiny grain of gold-dust ; whenever, on the other hand, we do aught after a slovenly, superficial, and careless manner, we weave into the structure of character a material which will yield as inevitably in the hour of temptation as wood, hay, and stubble before flame.

We sometimes, at the end of the day, reviewing the past hours, bitterly lament that we have done nothing in the way of character-building. "There is nothing to show for this day," we say mentally to ourselves. Ah ! but there is. Every moment has left its record on your heart. Every act has left you confirmed in a good habit or in a bad one. The soul-life has not halted for a second ; one has been growing to moral health, or toward decrepitude, consumption, and decay. If not gold, then wood ; if not silver, then hay ; if not costly stones, then stubble.

We shall not be saved on account of our works. The only thing that can secure salvation is the being built into God's foundation, the Rock Christ Jesus. But we shall be rewarded according to the manner in which we have built up the structure.

He that judgeth me is the Lord.

1 Cor. iv. 4.

THERE are four courts of trial.

First: *Man's judgment.*—It is significantly spoken of as man's "day." Our conduct is narrowly scrutinized and weighed by many eyes which we know not of, but which are fixed on every act and word—the eyes of our neighbors, associates, fellow-work people, servants. They are ever reasoning about us, comparing our lives with our professions, partly with the view of excusing themselves, if there is any gross inconsistency. But, after all, their verdict need not greatly move us. It is only for a day.

Second: *The judgment of fellow-Christians.*—We are perpetually being summoned before the court of the church circle to which we belong; not always because we are inconsistent with our professions, but whenever we overstep the pace at which the majority is slowly moving. To be too zealous, too eager, too earnest, too particular, will, in some Christian communities, expose to a great deal of adverse criticism. But we have not to look right and left to get the sentence of our fellow-believers when we are clearly prompted by the Spirit of God.

Third: *The judgment of conscience.*—"I judge not mine own self." We are all apt to arraign ourselves at our own bar, and pass verdicts which are altogether favorable, because we compare ourselves with characters and standards inferior to ourselves. It is a great mistake to judge yourself, for even if you score a favorable verdict—if you know nothing against yourself—it is liable to be reversed by the decisions of the Supreme Court.

Fourth: *The Lord's judgment.*—The Lord will come, bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, and making manifest the counsels of the heart.

Christ our passover is sacrificed for us ; therefore let us keep the feast.

1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

AT the time of the first Passover, outside, as the ominous midnight hour approached, Egypt gave herself up to her usual life. "They ate and drank ; they married and gave in marriage." But within their homes, the children of Israel stood around their tables, their loins girt, their staves in their hands, with unleavened bread packed up with their kneading-troughs in their clothes, waiting for the signal to depart. The Passover Lamb had been sacrificed ; its blood was on the door ; whilst its flesh, roast with fire, was being eaten. For seven days, all unleavened bread had been put away out of the houses of the chosen people, because leaven, in the Bible, is the symbol of the working of the corrupt principle.

The believer should look back.—The Paschal Lamb was sacrificed for us on the cross. Though He had done no sin, and was without blemish, yet He was slain for us without the gates of the city. He made there a sufficient sacrifice, satisfaction, oblation, for the sins of the whole world.

The believer should look around.—With lighted candle, search the heart of your house, that there may be no speck or mote of leaven. Let us keep the perpetual feast of the Christian life, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The believer should look on.—Soon we shall hear the midnight trumpet sound, "Arise and depart, for this is not your rest !" and we shall go forth from Egypt, where we have suffered, and toiled, and been misunderstood ; where also our Lord was crucified. It is but a little while (how little, how little !) and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you ? 1 Cor. vi. 19.

THIS is a sentence which should be deeply pondered ; every clause is significant. We evidently should know its deep and solemn meaning. Apparently it is one of the common-places of our holy religion. This knowledge, however, should not be merely that of the intellect, but born out of the deep musing of the heart.

The holy temple.—Built up of the dust of the earth, our bodies are rarer than the most glorious structures that ever the sun shone on, because they are meant to be the shrine and home of God. Jesus spake of the Temple of His Body ; and if He was so zealous for His Father's House that He drove out the unholy traffickers, and refused to allow a vessel to be carried through the courts, should we not be equally careful ? We are the custodians of the Divine residence ; let us be very careful that there be nothing to offend or trouble the celestial Inmate.

The Divine Inmate.—Too often He is grieved, and driven to occupy the most secret shrine, concealed and hidden beneath the heavy vail of our inconsistency and unbelief. He is not driven *out* by our sins, but driven *in*. Whenever, on the contrary, we put away our sin, and walk in the light as He is in the light ; whenever the vail is rent and the whole heart thrown open to Him—He comes in power to occupy every part of our being, so that there is no part dark, and the very body becomes transfigured.

The great price.—Bought as any slave standing in the market-place for sale ! Ransomed from the direst slavemaster to the dearest Lord ! The price—not corruptible things, as silver and gold—but precious blood ! Our life is henceforth not our own, but His.

Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God.

1 Cor. vii. 24.

STRONG temptations to restlessness beset the early Christians. The great change through which they had passed from heathenism to Christ threatened to dissolve all the ties by which they had been held, in the home, the business, and the State. Very necessary and wholesome, therefore, was the apostle's advice. Stay as you are, until God clearly leads you into something else—only with this difference, whatever be the *vocation* of your life, therein abide with God. Paul was only careful that the thought of God should penetrate their entire existence; all else would come right in time; and he was only anxious that they should be laid hold of by that central, vivifying, transmuting influence.

Practice the presence of God.—A godly brother used to say that we should establish ourselves in a sense of God's presence by an act of the will, which put aside wandering, frivolous, and evil thoughts, and that we should be continually conversing with Him; that we ought to give ourselves up to God, making Him the end of all our actions, and seeking our only satisfaction in doing His will; and that even the set times of prayer should not greatly differ from other times, because all were equally filled with God.

Such a sense equalizes our lot.—The slave realizes that he is God's free man; the master that he is God's slave. The poor are enriched, and the rich are convicted of their poverty. So this holy brother said that, in his business in the kitchen (to which naturally he had a great aversion), having accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of God and with prayer, he had found everything easy, and was very well pleased to continue in the same post so long as it was God's will.

If meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh forevermore. 1 Cor. viii. 13 (R. V.).

THERE are two principles for our guidance in doubtful and debatable questions. *First, the law of conscience.* The apostle does not hesitate to say that the scruples of the weaker brethren were unquestionably needless. Idols have no real existence, and the presentation of food in their presence before it is eaten is a matter of complete indifference. "If we eat, we are not the better; if we eat not, we are not the worse." At the same time, if a man were not able to reach this high standard, and still believed that an idol had a real existence, and that it was wrong for him to partake of food which had been offered to it, he must abide by that decision, and must on no account force himself to more liberal action. His conscience might be misinformed, and he should take every means of bringing it to a more healthy condition; but if it still remained stationary, he must accept its ruling.

Secondly, the law of charity. We must consider one another. No one liveth to himself. We are members of the body of Christ, and have no right to injure any who are so closely allied with us, and on whose healthy existence our own materially depends. If, then, we see that certain other souls are constantly being caused to stumble, because of what we do; not simply surprised and startled, but actually made to sin; trying to do as we do, but as often as they attempt it, falling short; unable to take our steep path without falling; always brought into condemnation when in our company; there is no alternative—for their sakes we must forego what is innocent and pleasant to ourselves. It may be a daily glass of wine, or attendance at some form of amusement, or some evil habit—but the love of Christ forbids.

Lest I myself should be a castaway.

1 Cor. ix. 27.

IS it for one moment to be supposed that Paul really feared being cast away from the love and presence of God into the outer darkness with its weeping and gnashing of teeth? Surely not! Had he not said unmistakably that nothing could avail to separate him from the love of God which was in Jesus Christ! No, it is impossible to think such a thing. He knew too well that none of Christ's members can be amputated; none of His sheep perish.

“The soul that to Jesus has fled for repose,
He will not, He cannot, desert to its foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to take,
He'll never—no, never—no, never forsake.”

But when the apostle speaks of being a cast-away, he means that he feared lest, after having proclaimed the rules of the contest to others, he should himself fail shamefully of the prize. And what was that prize? Certainly not forgiveness, nor eternal life; because these are not procured by any efforts of our own. These are not the prizes of agility or strength, but the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. What, then, is the prize? The context reveals it. It is surely the guerdon of winning souls; the blessed joy and crown of bringing to Jesus those who had otherwise never known Him.

But we may fall short of this. We may set others to do what we fail to do. We may appear before Christ with handfuls of withered leaves. We may yet be rejected. Esau missed the crown of his birthright; Moses the Promised Land; Saul the founding of a line of kings. We may miss utterly and irretrievably. God help us to watch and pray, and bring the body into subjection!

The profit of the many, that they may be saved.

1 Cor. x. 33.

PROBABLY the world has never seen a more enthusiastic soul-winner than the great apostle. If he visits a strange town, he will cast out the demon from a possessed girl. If he takes up tent-making, beside an unbelieving Jew and his wife, he will before long have won each for Christ. If he is cast into prison, he will have baptized the jailer before dawn. If he stands before a judge, he will almost persuade him to be a Christian. If he is a prisoner in a hired house, he will speak to all who come to him, and win a runaway slave like Onesimus to Christ, and make him profitable to Philemon. Always and everywhere, he sets himself to win souls.

Here, also, we see how this one passion ruled his behavior in all things. He was willing to yield to men in matters where only his own comfort, but not his conscience, was concerned. He sought to please all men in all things; not seeking his own profit, but "the profit of the many, that they may be saved."

Oh for more of this sacred passion!—such as inspired, for instance, the Moravians to expatriate themselves for the sake of the lepers of Table Bay!

A woman at the Presbyterian hospital at Canton, hearing of Christ, and loving Him, asked:

"How long can I live if I remain in the hospital?"

"Four months."

"And how long if I go home?"

"Two months," replied the doctor.

"I am going home," she said.

"But," urged the doctor, "you will lose half your life."

"Do you not think I would be glad to give half my life for the sake of telling my people of Jesus?"

And she went home.

Eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. 1 Cor. xi. 29 (R. V.).

HOW many humble and earnest souls this verse, as rendered in the A.V., has kept from the blessed enjoyment of the Lord's Table! They did not understand the nature of the sin which the apostle was describing; they were terrified by the word *damnation*, and they felt that it were better to forego the privilege than risk the peril.

The difficulties will, however, largely disappear, when we understand the disorders that disgraced the Corinthian Church, and which arose from the abuses of the love-feast which preceded the Lord's Supper. At that repast each disciple was expected to put the provisions he had brought with him into a common stock, from which all shared alike. But at Corinth, the rich and their friends ate of their luxuries; whilst the poor were allowed to go without. After such an introduction, the Church could not approach the Lord's Table with that appreciation of the solemnity and tenderness of the ordinance which could alone consist with the holy memories of the betrayal night.

The eating and drinking unworthily arose from not discerning the Body. This does not refer to the Lord's Body which was broken for us; but to His Body the Church. "The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ, seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body?" (1 Cor. x. 16, 17). We eat and drink unworthily when we fail to discern that the poor, and weak, and simple, who belong to Jesus, belong also to us; that they are members with us; and that we are bound to share our gifts and graces with them for the glory of our common Lord. The one thing which disqualifies us from joining in this feast of dying love is our refusal to feel and manifest love to all in the Body.

No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. *1 Cor. xii. 3.*

JESUS is Saviour, but is He Lord? Hast thou yielded to Him the Lordship? Nothing short of this will give thee true peace and power. Thou must be brought to say with the psalmist, "Other lords beside Thee have had dominion over me; but by Thee only will I make mention of Thy name."

Jesus must be Lord *of thy heart*; every affection must be brought under His most wise and loving control. He must be Lord *of thy home*, so that no conversation may be indulged, no recreation set afoot, no society entertained, which is inconsistent with His character and claims. He must be Lord *of thy business and its returns*, so that thou shalt live in perpetual communication with Him, along the lines of the Heavenly Telephone; and in the use of all its proceeds He must have the supreme voice. He must be Lord *of thy plans*. It is for Him to say Go, or Come, or Do this. That was a true message which Ahasuerus sent through the good Ezra to the Jewish people: "Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done exactly for the house of the God of heaven." I liked that word *exactly*.

But this perpetual recognition of the Lordship of Jesus is only possible to those who have yielded their entire nature to the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, who loves to *glorify* Christ. Dost thou seek the attitude of consecration which thus honors thy Lord? Then let the Holy Spirit work it for thee! Wouldst thou have it maintained? Let Him maintain it! And if thou askest thyself, whether thou hast received the Pentecostal endowment, be sure that thou hast, if with all thine heart thou sayest that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This is the certain test.

The greatest of these is love.

1 Cor. xiii. 13 (R. V.).

WHAT a light must have shone on the apostle's face as he broke into this exquisite idyll, this perfect poem of love! The change in tone and rhythm must have caused his amanuensis to look suddenly up into his master's face, and lo! it was as the face of an angel. Why is love greatest?

Because it is the crown of the other two, and includes them.—Faith is the root; hope is the stem; love the perfect flower. You may have faith without hope, and hope without love; but you cannot have love apart from faith and hope.

Because it is likest God.—God's nature is not specially characterized by faith, because there is no uncertainty with His perfect knowledge; nor by hope, because there is no future to His eternal existence. But God is love; and to love is to resemble Him.

Because it will immeasurably outlast the other two.—Human knowledge, at best but the spellings of babes, will vanish in the perfect light of heaven. Eloquence will seem like the lisplings of infancy. Prophecies will have no place, because all the landscape of the future will be revealed. Faith and hope will be lost in realization. Love only is forever.

Because love brings the purest rapture.—“Where is heaven?” asked a wealthy Christian of his minister. “I will tell you where it is,” was the quick reply: “if you will go to the store, and buy £10 worth of provisions and necessities, and take them to that poor widow on the hillside, who has three of her children sick. She is poor, and a member of the Church. Take a nurse, and some one to cook the food. When you get there, read the twenty-third Psalm, and kneel by her side and pray. Then you will find out where heaven is.”

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world.

1 Cor. xiv. 10 (R. V.).

THERE are the voices of nature.—The deep bass of the ocean wave booming along the shore ; the crash of the ice ; the silver choirs of the stars ; the song of bird, hum of bee, shrill trumpet of gnat, the rustle of the leaves, the patter of the rain, the chorus of the hailstones—how varied, and charming, and musical ! No doubt if we could listen to all these from a distance we should detect perfect chords.

There are the voices of human life.—First, the mother's ; then of the brothers and sisters of our home (and sad is the lot of the lonely child which has none) ; then of the teacher, the minister, the friend, the lover, not one could be spared ; not one that has not a significance ; not one to whose words we shall not do well to give heed.

There are the voices of our daily lot.—Now we are called to experience joy, now sorrow, now gain, and now loss ; now of the harsh reprimand of disaster ; now of the tender assurances of sunny hours. Behind all these God is speaking. Listen, therefore, heedfully to all, and try to acquire the lesson He is longing to inculcate. What is He saying to you, by your circumstances, at this moment ? Is it in tones of pleading, of remonstrance, of blame ?

“ Where is Thy favored haunt, Eternal Voice,
The region of Thy choice,
Where, undisturbed by sin and earth, the soul
Owns Thy entire control ?

“ 'Tis then we hear the voice of God *within*,
Pleading with care and sin ;
‘ Child of My Love,
How have I wearied thee ? ’ ”

Christ hath been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep. 1 Cor. xv. 20 (R. V.).

WORDS which are altogether transcendent ! How they thrill us and inspire ! What memories they recall ! How impossible is it not to feel their majesty. Surely no brain nor lip of man had begotten them ! They bear the mint-mark of heaven.

On the day that Jesus arose, the first-fruit sheaf of the barley harvest was being waved by the High Priest in the Temple, as the representative of the myriads that stood stacked amid the stubble of the fields. It was the specimen sheaf—representative, pattern, and pledge of all the rest. The risen Christ is the pattern and pledge of what His people will be when their bodies shall be fashioned anew in the likeness of His resurrection.

He is pattern.—His body bore the same general outlines as before ; so will theirs. It was recognizable by those who had known and loved Him, even to the tones of His voice ; so will it be with theirs. It was the ethereal and pliant instrument of His spirit ; so will theirs be. It could no more return to corruption ; no more will theirs. It was invulnerable to disease and pain ; such an experience awaits them too.

He is pledge.—He does not stand alone. He is united to us by a myriad indissoluble ties. What the power of God did for Him it will do for us. Those that sleep in Jesus God will bring with Him, and we that are alive and remain shall be caught up. There shall not a hoof be left behind. Not one purchased body of a saint, however obscure or unworthy, shall be excepted from the effect of the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. Meanwhile, in the kindly embrace of Mother Earth, like the seed-germs of a vast harvest, the resurrection principle in the bodies of the saints awaits the resurrection signal.

If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema.

1 Cor. xvi. 22 (R. V.).

THIS sentence reminds us of the saintly Samuel Rutherford, of whose Letters the holy Richard Baxter said: "Hold off the Bible, such a book the world never saw." And the late revered and beloved C. H. Spurgeon said of them: "When we are dead and gone, let the world know that Spurgeon held Rutherford's Letters to be the nearest thing to inspiration which can be found in all the writings of mere men."

Take this extract, because it indicates how you may come to love the Lord Jesus as he did:—

"Strive to make prayer, and reading, and holy company, and holy conference, your delight; and when delight cometh in, you shall, by little and little, find the sweetness of Christ, till at length your soul be over head and ears in Christ's sweetness. Then shall you be taken up to the top of the mountain with the Lord, to know the delights of spiritual love, and the glory and excellency of a seen, revealed, felt, and embraced Christ; and then you shall not be able to loose yourself off from Christ, and to bind your soul to old lovers; then, and never till then, are all the paces, motions, and wheels of your soul in a right tune and in a spiritual temper.

"But if this world and the lusts thereof be your delight, I know not what Christ can make of you; you cannot be metal for a vessel of glory and mercy. My desire is that my Lord would give me broader and deeper thoughts to feed myself with wondering at His love. I would I could weigh it, but I have no balance for it. When I have worn my tongue to the stump in praising Christ, I have done nothing to Him. What remaineth then, but that my debt to the love of Christ lie unpaid for all eternity!"

Who comforteth us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort. 2 Cor. i. 4 (R. V.).

CHILD of God, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which tries thee, as though some strange thing had happened. Rejoice, inasmuch as it is a sure sign that thou art on the right track. All the saints have gone by this road, notably the writer of this Epistle.

Its keyword is *affliction*, because written amid afflictions so great that the apostle despaired of life. It is steeped in affliction, as a handkerchief with the flowing blood of a fresh wound. But in this passage the apostle has built himself a little chamber of comfort, the stones of which were quarried from the pit of his own sorrow. He blesses God, who had led him into affliction to teach him the art of comfort, that by observing how God comforted, he might become proficient in the art.

The world is full of comfortless hearts— orphan children crying in the night. Our God pities them, and would comfort them through thee. But ere thou undertake this lofty ministry thou must be trained, and thou must therefore pass through the very trials that they are exposed to. Now watch how God comforts thee. Keep a diary, if thou wilt, of His procedure. Ponder in thine heart the length of each splint, the folds of each bandage, the ministration of each opiate, cordial, or drug. This will have a twofold effect, in turning thy thoughts from thy miseries to thy mercies, and in taking away the sense of useless and aimless existence.

There is evidently scope for comfort even in heaven, for it is said that God will wipe away tears from all faces. Oh thou that art sorrowful even unto death, be sure that some day the Comforter will get the victory over thy sorest griefs.

We are a sweet savor of Christ unto God.

2 Cor. ii. 15 (R. V.).

THE idea is borrowed from an ancient Roman triumph, which to the eyes of the world of that day was the most glorious spectacle which the imagination could conceive. The apostle compares himself first to one of the prisoners led in long chains behind the conqueror's chariot; then to a servant bearing incense; and lastly to the incense itself that rose all along the line of the procession.

Nothing touches the sense more quickly than sweet odors, unless it be noxious ones; and they almost instantly recall some scene of the past with which they were indissolubly associated. For instance, the scent of new-mown hay will carry us off to merry scenes in the far away days of childhood. Thus the apostle wished that his life might be a sweet perfume, floating on the air, reminding men, and above all reminding God, of Christ. It was as though he said, "I desire so to live that I may perpetually remind God of the obedience, sacrifice, and devotion of the Lord Jesus, so that my words and deeds may recall to His heart similar ones in the earthly life of Jesus."

A sweet savor of Christ! It does not consist so much in what we do, but in our manner of doing it; not so much in our words or deeds, as in an indefinable sweetness, tenderness, courtesy, unselfishness, and desire to please others to their edification. It is the breath and fragrance of a life hidden with Christ in God, and deriving its aroma from fellowship with Him. Wrap the habits of your soul in the sweet lavender of your Lord's character.

The secret of abounding joy in self-sacrifice is the happy consciousness, such as Enoch had, that we have pleased God. To have this is to secure deliverance from self-consciousness.

Beholding as in a glass (A. V.). *Reflecting as a mirror* (R. V.).
2 Cor. iii. 18.

MOSES veiled his face, and the veiled law-giver was characteristic of the dispensation he inaugurated. It was a partial revelation, gleaming through a veil, expressing truths in rites and types and symbols. But Christ has torn away the veil, removed the fences of the mount of vision, and revealed to babes the deepest secrets of God's heart. The apostle's phrase is characteristic of Christianity, "Behold, I *show* you (*i. e.*, unveil) a mystery."

The object of visions.—"The glory of the Lord." Concerning which we may accept the statement of a trustworthy commentator, that the reference is not to the incomprehensible, incommunicable lustre of the absolute Divine perfectness; but to that glory which, as John says, tabernacled in the Lord Jesus Christ, full of grace and truth—the glory of loving, pitying words and lovely deeds; the glory of faultless and complete manhood; the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The nature of the vision.—"We behold." It is true that we cannot see. "Whom, not having seen, ye love." But it is also true that the heart has eyes, by which it looks away unto Jesus. "Seeing is believing," is a familiar proverb among men; but "believing is seeing" is a true aphorism of the spirit which clings to the Lord by its faith and love.

The effect of the vision.—*First, we reflect.* The beauty of His face glancing on ours will be mirrored, as a man's eye will contain a tiny miniature picture of what he is beholding. *Then we shall be changed.* If you try to represent Jesus in your character and behavior, you will become transfigured into His likeness. Love makes like. Imitation produces assimilation. Reflect and resemble.

While we look . . . at the things which are not seen.
2 Cor. iv. 18.

WE are here bidden to look *through* the things which are seen ; to consider them as the glass window through which we pass to that which is behind and beyond. You do not waste your time by admiring the frame or casket of some rare jewel, but penetrate to the jewel itself ; so, day by day, look through the material and transient to the eternal purpose, the Divine idea, the deep that lieth under.

“All visible things,” said Carlyle, “are emblems. What thou seest is not there on its own account ; strictly speaking, is not there at all. Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea and body it forth.” This is an exaggerated way of stating the old saying, “Everything that is, is double.” Both, however, illustrate the affirmation of the text.

Look for God’s thought in all the incidents, circumstances, and objects of your daily life. Do not stop at the outward ; penetrate to the inward and eternal. Beneath that bitter physical suffering there are stores of Divine fortitude and grace. Beneath that trying dispensation there are celestial compensations. Beneath those sweet family ties there are suggestions of love and friendship, which can never grow old or pass away. Beneath the letter of Scripture is the spirit ; beneath the ordinance, oneness with the loving Saviour ; beneath the world of nature, the processes of the eternal husbandry.

When such is the attitude of the soul, afflictions, that might otherwise have weighed as heavy, become light ; and those that drag through long and tedious years, seem but for a moment. And without exception, they all go to produce that receptivity of character that can contain the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

All things are of God.

2 Cor. v. 18.

OF here is equivalent to *out of*. All the precious contents of the Gospel have emanated from the heart of God; so that we may say with the psalmist, "All my springs are in Thee."

That we have a building, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, to which to go when the earthly house of this tabernacle is broken up; that it is possible for the mortal to be swallowed up in the descending glory of the Second Advent; that we have received the Spirit as earnest of our future glory; that we shall be one day at home with the Lord; that One died for all that the dominion of the self-life should be destroyed, and that they should henceforth live, not to themselves, but to Him; that it is possible to become a new creation in Christ; that God is already reconciled to the world of men, and is only waiting for them to be reconciled to Him; that He hath committed to men the ministry of reconciliation, and commissioned them to be His ambassadors; that it is possible for us to be the righteousness of God in Jesus—all these things have issued from His heart of love.

Oh for a soul as wide as the utmost circle of the highest heaven that containeth all, to contain His love! Oh, world's wonder! Oh, what a sight to be up in heaven, in "the fair orchard of Paradise!" But the very greatness of His provisions will make our doom the greater, if we refuse or ignore them. The men who made light of the king's invitation had their city burned. This is the terror of the Lord; and our duty is to beseech men not to put away the reconciliation which God offers. Let the "all things" of your life be of God's direction, impulse, and inspiration.

THIS is the first clause in one of the most wonderful series of paradoxes in all literature. Let us class together these different conceptions of the apostle, as held by those who judged him by his outward and inward life respectively.

Judged from the view-point of this age he was a deceiver, intent on some purpose of his own, misleading and hoodwinking his converts. In the annals of this world he was utterly unknown, and there was no attempt to chronicle his doings or record his words. His life seemed to the gay and worldly a prolonged death, whilst to his close associates and friends it was a perpetual chastening. Very sorrowful, very poor, very destitute—such was his appearance as seen from the outside. And many must have turned from it and felt thankful that the lines had fallen to them in pleasanter places.

Judged from the view-point of eternity he was known to be true, and building the temple of truth. By every new dying to the world around, his inner life was being recruited, deepened, and purified. His sufferings were chastening and pruning him, that he might bear more fruit. Amid his outward griefs he was ever drinking at the wells of purest joy; amid his poverty he was enriching the world with the most precious wealth; amid his utter destitution he was handling the imperishable riches of eternity.

The monks of Chartreux, when they first erected their monastery, made all their windows look in on the small inner court, but had none commanding the sublime mountains and glaciers around. So, too, many lives are always contemplating the trifles of earth's court-yard! Oh that such would take into their view the unseen and eternal!

Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement.

2 Cor. vii. 1 (R. V.).

THE closing paragraph of the previous chapter tells us what this defilement stands for ; and in the enumeration note *the increasing bonds of approximation* which each word indicates. An unequal yoke in ill-matched intercourse with unbelievers leads to fellowship, and this to communion, and this again to concord, and this to partnership ; whilst the culmination of the entire series is agreement, and the yielding up of the body for the possession and indwelling of idols. Let us beware of the beginning of this awful approximation. It is impossible to stand still ; and they who think lightly of marrying an unbeliever may in the end hear words like those which watchers heard spoken in the doomed temple on the night before it fell into the hands of Titus. "There was, as it were, the rushing of wings, and voices were heard saying, Let us depart."

There is not only *defilement of the flesh*, but of the spirit. It is not enough to avoid the gross sins of the outward life. Those of the inner temple and disposition are equally abhorrent to the holiness of God. We must come out and be separate from the latter as well as the former, or we shall never realize what God means when He promises to receive us, and to be a Father to us.

The word *cleanse* is very decisive in the Greek. It calls for sudden, decisive action ; and if you answer, that sin is too closely interwoven with your nature to be thus summarily disposed of, remember that God demands our will only. Directly we are perfectly willing and eager, He steps in and does all the rest. At unknown depths the Spirit of God is at work within us ; let us work out what He works in, that we may be welcomed to God's heart.

See that ye abound in this grace also.

2 Cor. viii. 7.

THE grace of liberality is as much a gift of God as faith, or utterance, or knowledge, or love. This is implied in our text, and distinctly stated in the first verse, where the apostle says that he desires to make known the grace of God, which had been given to the churches of Macedonia, so that they were able in their deep poverty to abound in riches of liberality. In the ninth verse we learn that this grace first dwelt in our blessed Lord, who, though He was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. If yours is a grudging, niggard nature, be sure to appropriate the royal nature of the Lord Jesus, that it may fill and possess you.

Probably there is no greater test of our true religion than our behavior in giving. How few, comparatively, give in proportion to their income! How few give systematically! How few have learned the joy and luxury of giving, so that they *abound* therein!

This arises partly because they do not realize that they are stewards of God's property, and that He expects them to devote all they own to Him, keeping back only a necessary percentage for themselves and their families, as a steward might who was farming an estate for his absent master. And partly it arises from mistrust of God, and the fear that some day there may be a sudden falling off of supplies. Oh that each reader would consider that all is God's, and begin by always giving a certain proportion of every pound, so as to be sure of not robbing God of His own. Pray day and night that you may *abound* in this grace also; and then, in faith that God is answering your prayer, begin to do violence to your churlish, niggard nature. What though it protest—*Give!*

He that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food.

2 Cor. ix. 10 (R. V.).

IN every harvest there is a twofold object. First, the supply of seed for the next autumn's sowing, and then of food for those that sow or reap; so in the spiritual sphere God will not fail either sowers or reapers.

All sowers must eat.—However much wheat has passed through the sower's hands, he is not fed thereby. At night he returns hungry to his home. So we, who are engaged in the work of God, cannot live on what we do for the world around. After the most fruitful day of service, we need to take our Bibles and feed our famished souls by meditation and prayer. We must not mistake the glow and exhilaration of the sanctuary for nourishment. They are rather a stimulant. Therefore we may expect God to increase the fruits of our righteousness. Shall Boaz cause handfuls on purpose to fall for Ruth, and shall not God supply our need? Will the Father not provide bread to those who are engaged in tilling His fields?

All eaters should sow.—It would never do for the farmer to live on all the produce of his fields. He must sow a certain proportion of his grain. And nothing is more foreign to the genius of true religion than to be always nursing and ministering to oneself; eating the fine wheat of the Gospel, but not sowing it in other hearts; consuming the consolations of the Divine Spirit, but not endeavoring to pass them on to others. Oh ye who have eaten bountifully, sow bountifully; else ye shall suffer the results of spiritual repletion and indigestion. And note this precious assurance, that God will supply seed for daily and weekly sowing for the congregation and the class; and that He will multiply it when sown.

Bringing every thought into . . . the obedience of Christ.

2 Cor. x. 5.

THE apostle is planning a campaign ; his words glow with the fire of military enthusiasm : but, as one has eloquently said, the weapons of his warfare are not carnal ; the standard under which he fights is a more sacred sign than that of Cæsar ; the territory he invades is more difficult of conquest than any which kept the conquerors of the world at bay. He sees rising before him the lofty fortresses of hostile error ; they must be reduced or razed. Every mountain fastness to which the enemy can retreat must be scaled and destroyed ; and every thought of the soul, which is hostile to the authority of the Divine Truth, must become a prisoner in the camp of Christ.

Be sure to distinguish between the proper use of the intellect by the man who recognizes its necessary limitations and uses it in the humble and reverent inquiry after truth, and that undue exaltation of the intellect, which sets itself on high as the ultimate judge of truth, or which roams wildly, unheeding the Divine control. There are vain thoughts, sensual thoughts, cynical and self-reliant thoughts, sceptical thoughts, proud thoughts, wandering and wayward thoughts ; but the apostle says that, however strongly they fortify themselves against Christ, they should and must be brought into captivity. Paul once *thought* he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus, but became His humble disciple.

The intellect has its province, but faith has hers ; and while the intellect tends to exalt man, faith humbles him and leads him captive in the chains of love. We must come with absolute obedience to Christ, that every vail may be torn away, and whatever blurs the clear surface of the mirroring intellect may be removed.

THIS enumeration was made before the imprisonment at Cæsarea and the voyage to Rome. How little do we know of Paul's life, after all ! Every victory was hardly fought for and dearly won.

These sufferings attest the truth of Christianity.—Whenever a doubt crosses your mind with respect to the Resurrection, or any other Gospel fact, say to yourself, Paul knew everything that could be said against it. He was in the secrets of the Sanhedrim ; and if he believed it, we certainly may. And he had nothing to gain by his witness. It was to his great loss, and the shattering of his position in Israel, that he became a Christian.

These sufferings approve the genuineness of Paul's character.—This age is athirst for biography ; it loves to read the story of its great men ; but sometimes we ask whether they are just as real and good and pure as we have been led to hope. There is one life at least about which no such inquiry can be raised. The severest tests may be applied to this diamond, but it shines only the brighter—a very Koh-i-noor, “ A mountain of light.”

These sufferings approve the power of the Holy Spirit.—Such love had He inspired toward the Blessed Lord in the heart of the apostle, that he counted the loss of all things gain, and the uncounted sorrows of his lot as light and but for a moment, if only he might win Christ, and know Him, and be found in Him. You cannot explain a life like this apart from the mighty power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. What a puzzle the Christian presents to the world ! I remember how a poor child of fashion and sin kept asking me once, “ What do you Christians get ? ” It was quite impossible to explain.

When I am weak, then am I strong.

2 Cor. xii. 10.

WE need not discuss the nature of Paul's thorn in the flesh. It is enough that he calls it "a stake," as though he had been impaled. It must have, therefore, been very painful. It must also have been physical, because he could not have prayed thrice for the removal of a moral taint, and been refused. It came from Satan, permitted by God, as in the case of Job, to buffet his servant. It is not unlikely that he suffered from weak eyes, or some distressing form of ophthalmia; hence the eagerness of the Galatian converts to give him their eyes (see Gal. iv. 15).

God does not take away our thorns, but He communicates sufficient grace. He always answers prayer, though not as we expect. Let the music of these tender words soar unto thee, poor sufferer! "My grace is sufficient even *for thee*." Sufficient when friends forsake, and foes pursue; sufficient to make thee strong against an infuriated crowd and a tyrannical judge; sufficient for excessive physical exertion and spiritual conflict; sufficient to enable thee to do as much work, and even more, than if health and vigor were not impaired, because the very weakness of our nature is the chosen condition under which God will manifest the strength of His.

Do not sit down before that mistaken marriage, that uncongenial business, that physical weakness, as though thy life must be a failure; but take in large reinforcements of that Divine grace which is given to the weak and to those who have no might. It is clear that Paul had reached such a condition, that it was a matter of deep congratulation to him to be deficient in much that men hold dear, and to have what most men dread. He rejoiced in all that diminished creature-might and strengthened his hold on God.

The Communion of the Holy Ghost.

2 Cor. xiii. 14.

HOW often these words are uttered without any real appreciation of their depth of meaning ! The word *communion* signifies having in common. It is used of our fellowship with one another (1 Cor. x. 16) and with God (1 John i. 3). The bond of such fellowship is always through the Holy Spirit. As the ocean unites all lands, and is the medium through which they are able to exchange commodities, so does the blessed Spirit unite the Persons of the Blessed Trinity to each other, and us to them, and secures that oneness for which our Saviour prayed.

How wonderful it is to have the privilege of this Divine fellowship ! That we need never be alone again ; that we can at any moment turn to Him for advice and direction ; that we may draw on His resources for the supply of every need ; that it is impossible to exhaust or even tax His willingness to counsel and succor ; that there is no kind of service or suffering into which He is not prepared to enter with us ! Surely, if we would but give ourselves time to realize this marvellous fact, there would be no room for the despondency which at times threatens to deprive us of heart and hope.

Of course, we must be very careful of the tender sensibilities and holy disposition of our divine Confederate. We cannot ruthlessly grieve Him by our harshness or impurity at one moment, and turn to Him for His succor and direction at the next. Such divine union as lies within our reach certainly demands on our part watchfulness, a tender conscience, a yielded and pliant will, a heart which has no other love, no affection nor idol inconsistent with the Spirit's fellowship.

It was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal His Son in me.
Gal. i. 15, 16 (R. V.).

IF you have truly believed in the Son of God, it is certain that He, by the Spirit, has taken up His abode in your heart. But perhaps He is hidden in the depths of your nature, as the young Joash in the heart of the Temple. He is, therefore, unable to exert that influence on your inner thought and outward life that He should. Is it not befitting that you should ask the Father to reveal His Son *in* you? He has been revealed to you as the Divine Substitute, but not in you as the source and spring of holiness.

Beneath the body with its physical existence, and the mind with the play of intellect, lies the spirit of man, like the most holy place in the Temple of old. That is the shrine in which the Shechinah of Christ's presence shines, and in which we can hold fellowship with Him face to face. Alas, that so heavy a veil of unbelief, of absorption in the world around us, of inattention, hangs between Him and us! Would that the strong hands which rent the veil in twain when our Saviour died would rend in twain all that deprives us of this inspiring and most helpful vision of the Son, so that we might anticipate the eternal years!

But such revelations are only given that we may better help others. Not for selfish enjoyment, but for ministering help. Hence the apostle says, "that I might preach Him among the Gentiles." Be pleased, O Father, to give us that revelation, that we may speak as those who have seen the great sight, and need no further conference with flesh and blood! Then, like the apostles of old, we shall go forth among men, saying, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live.

Gal. ii. 20 (R. V.).

CLEARLY Paul intends us to understand that the life of which *he* was the centre had been nailed to the Saviour's cross, and that Christ's life had been substituted for it. Some have spoken of this real life of Christ in the soul as being mystical and untrue ; but there can be no kind of doubt that it is the constant affirmation of the New Testament.

Death, the gate of life.—It is obviously so in nature. Once each year nature lies down in its grave, sleeps in unbroken repose, and steps forth again with the glory of a freshly-renewed beauty. Often the overclouding of one faculty has been the signal of the quickening of all the rest. The blind Milton becomes the author of the "Paradise Lost." Death of a twin-soul will often give to the survivor a new impulse toward a spiritual and transfigured affection. We cannot be possessed by the self-life and the Christ-life at the same moment. And wherever, by God's grace, we erect the cross and assign our own life to its nails, the Spirit of Christ will breathe life and power.

In the flesh, but not after the flesh.—We live our life in the flesh, as aforetime, doing the duties of our ordinary existence with careful precision ; but we are no longer controlled by the selfish principle which too long dominated us. The attraction of earth is overborne by the mighty drawing of the eternal and unseen. The rush of the whirlpool is unable to prevail over the throb of the steam-propeller within.

Not I.—Yet loved and ransomed by the Son of God, each of us is distinct to His loving eye. He does not bulk us all together as a mass, but singles each out for the gift of Himself, His prayers, His blood, His ceaseless thought.

That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
Gal. iii. 14.

“THE promise of the Spirit” is the invariable term for the special Pentecostal gift ; and this is to be equally received by faith as the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. To me this text once came as a perfect revelation. It was the clue to unravel perplexity, the point around which truth held long in solution suddenly crystallized. Before this verse spoke to my heart it had been my constant endeavor to feel the Spirit’s presence as the sign of my having received ; but now it became clear that one might receive by simple faith God’s very richest communications, even though the emotion tarried long.

The stages have been thus specified :—

There is such a blessing.—Yes ; there can be no doubt of this ; for it pleased the Father that the fullness of the Holy Spirit should dwell in Jesus, that He might communicate Him to each member of His Church.

It is for me.—At Pentecost Peter said, This promise is for as many as the Lord our God shall call.

I have not received.—It is very important to realize what your standing is. Paul’s first inquiry of the Ephesians was to ascertain this.

I would give anything if it might be mine.—Because of the life, and love, and power it would bring into your life, and the immense increase of power over others, there is no sacrifice you should be unwilling to make.

I do now in humble faith receive.—There may be no coronet of flame, nor rush of wind, nor flash of joy ; but if we have put ourselves in the right attitude toward God, and opened our hearts to receive—He who taught us to hunger and thirst must have bestowed.

Until Christ be formed in you.

Gal. iv. 19.

CHRIST is in us, if we truly believe in Him, as the sap in the vine, the air in the lung, the steam in the engine ; but He may not be formed in us.

Is it not possible that the indefinable sensation of joy and pain, of yearning and unfulfilled desire, are all attributable to this deep-seated process ? Christ is being formed within our hearts, dispossessing the old evil self-life, and taking its place.

“O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,
And all things else recede ;
My heart be daily nearer Thee,
From sin be daily freed.

“Make this poor self grow less and less,
Be Thou my life and aim ;
Oh, make me daily through Thy grace
More meet to bear Thy name.”

The mention of *travail* in this connection suggests that this in-forming of Christ does not take place apart from suffering. And probably it is at times when we are in a furnace of pain that the Christ in us grows most quickly. “When my pain became unbearable,” says one, “I became conscious that there is a part of our being which no physical pain, and no mental anguish, can disturb. And there came to me such a sense of God—so enfolding, so assuring, so satisfying—that I could as well doubt the shining of the sun.” The Comforter had come—Christ was being formed within.

In the egg, when first laid, there is a tiny point of life amid the thick, viscous fluid ; but this gradually increases, while the other diminishes, and at last there is hardly a trace of this left, and the chick is formed, the egg-shell is broken, and the tiny feathered thing steps forth. The chick is formed in the shell.

Ye may not do the things that ye would.

Gal. v. 17 (R. V).

THIS is a notable rendering of the R. v., which throws a flood of light on the entire passage. The A. v. has it, "Ye cannot do"; it is more correct to say, "Ye may not do." It is always possible to go back and to fall under the tyrannous power of the evil self-principle, the flesh, either in its more debased or refined form; but as long as we are led by the Spirit, live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, He energizes against the flesh, keeping it in the place of death, and allowing the life of Christ to work freely.

In Christian ethics there must be, first, a definite willingness to surrender ourselves to His death. Secondly, there must be a perpetual yielding to the indwelling grace and power of the Holy Spirit. He will deal with the self-life in the deep abysses of your nature. When the antiseptic influence of carbolic acid is in the atmosphere it counteracts the microbes of disease, so that they cannot do as otherwise they would in infecting healthy bodies with disease. An eminent surgeon told me the other day that he was accustomed to boil his operating instruments in antiseptic mixture, that they might not carry microbes to the open wounds. Oh that those of us who are used as instruments by God would take heed!

When the baleful effect of the self-life is arrested, the fruits of the Spirit appear naturally and easily. Note the distinction between *work*, in which there is effort, and *fruit*, which swells so imperceptibly and silently on the branch—pressed out from within. Each of these fruits is a variation of the first, which is love. Joy is love on wings; peace, with the wings folded; long-suffering, love in the sick-room; goodness, in business; meekness, in society; self-control, in the regimen of habit for the sake of others.

Let no man trouble me : for I bear branded on my body the marks of Jesus. Gal. vi. 17 (R. V.).

AS a slave was branded with the initials of his owner, so was Paul. It was his pride to count himself the slave of Jesus, and to regard the scars which had eaten into his flesh as the brand-marks of his Master. Why should men try to deflect him from his course, when he was so absolutely implicated in the service of the one great Master, Christ ?

The Service of Jesus.—It is founded in His blood, by which He purchased us to be His own ; but it must be accepted by the glad consent of the will. We must awake each morning as His property, take His commands for the day, and lie down at night, only satisfied when He has said, Well done ! We must own to ourselves that we have no personal rights, no locked rooms, no kind of reserve.

The Brand of Jesus.—The dislike which our religion engenders ; the losses to which principle compels ; the averted look, the distant manner on the part of those who could not make enough of us when we lived the life of the world—these are as much His brand, the brand of His Cross, as the weals of recent scourgings on the apostle's flesh.

The Peace of Jesus.—"Let no man trouble me." My heart has cast her anchor ; my soul her foundation ; my life her aim. If He is satisfied, I am content, though the world is in arms. If He is with me, I have good company, though all forsake. The Master said, "Trouble her not."

"Lord, as Thy temple's portals close
Behind the outward-parting throng,
So shut my spirit in repose ;
So bind it here, Thy flock among :
The fickle wanderer else will stray
Back to the world's wide-parted way."

W. E. Gladstone.

Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Eph. i. 13 (R. V.).

POSSESSED.—The saints have been purchased at great cost by the precious blood of the Son of God. Not only their spirits, but their bodies, have been bought with an infinite expenditure. Is it not a wonderful thought that God should have thought it worth His while to expend so much on us ! But, since He has done it, we cannot suppose that He will not make all He can of us ! He will bring His estate under cultivation ; there will be no corner of it that will not yield Him produce.

To be redeemed.—Our bodies are owned by God, but they are not yet entirely redeemed. And if we should die before the Lord's advent, they will return to their mother earth, possessed but not redeemed. Hence the apostle says that we are waiting for our adoption—to wit, the redemption of our body (Rom. viii. 23). We are under the sentence of corruption for Adam's sin ; but we are to be redeemed.

Sealed.—In Ezekiel's day a mark was set on the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for sin (Ezek. ix. 4) ; and in the Apocalypse we read of the sealing of God's servants (Rev. vii. 2, 3). For sealing there are needed the softened wax ; the imprint of the beloved face ; the steady pressure. Would that the Spirit might impress the face of our dear Lord on our softened hearts, that they may keep it forevermore !

This sealing is an earnest of our inheritance.—The eternal future is all unknown, yet we may guess at it, because the work of the Spirit within us is the first-fruits—the grapes of Eshcol, showing what the vintage will be ; the earnest-penny, which is the pledge as well as part of the entire payment ; the first streak of the coming day.

We are His workmanship.

Eph. ii. 10.

THE Greek word might be literally rendered *His poem*. As the metre varies in the poems of a laureate, so does the course of one life differ from another; but God has a thought, a plan, a purpose for each. This lyric, that heroic, another dramatic.

Created for good works.—How carefully the apostle defines the true position of *works* in the divine life. In the foregoing verses he insists that we are not saved by our works, that none should boast; but, as though to meet the objection that his system was inconsistent with holy living, he affirms that the whole intention of God was that we should manifest our new life in Christ by the holy life in which it fruits. We were created in Him unto good works. Whatever good works may be demanded of you, dare to believe that you were created in Christ Jesus to do them. There is a perfect adjustment between the two.

The good works prepared.—Our new creation in Christ Jesus and the preparation of our life-work are due to the same mind. God who made us has prepared our path for us. It may lie up hill or down dale; may be lined with grassy sward or be full of jagged stones; may be short with the years of childhood or long with those of old age; may consist in lying on a couch to suffer or in strenuous activity—but every yard has been prepared.

Our daily walk.—We have not to cut or make our path; but simply to follow it, one step at a time. And when the heart or flesh fails, when the way seems too difficult, or the door too strait—we must look always unto Jesus, who has gone along the same track, asking that His righteousness may go before us, and set us in the way of His steps (Psa. lxxxv. 13, R. V.).

To make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery.

Eph. iii. 9 (R. V.).

THIS chapter is parallel with Col. ii. To the stewardship of the apostle Paul two mysteries were entrusted, with the intention that he should unravel and explain them to our race.

The mystery.—A mystery is a hidden secret. The word does not imply that there is no solution, but that the solution has not yet been communicated. God has many secrets, which unfold as the ages are ripe for them, but not before. This secret, which was hid in the Divine heart from all ages, was that the Gentiles are on an equality with the Jews in the Church. Under the old covenant they were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise; but under the new they are fellow-heirs, fellow-members, and fellow-partakers of the blessings of the Gospel.

The stewardship of the mystery.—The apostle felt that whatever had been communicated to him was not for himself alone, but for all his fellow-disciples. Hence he was ever accounting himself a steward of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. iv. 1). This is the clue, also, to his assertion that he was a debtor to all men for Christ's sake. What was given him was on deposit for others. See to it that you count nothing you possess or know as your own; look on all as a sacred trust.

The exercise of His stewardship.—"To preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men know." It is not enough to proclaim, as a herald might; we must stay with the dull of wit and slow of thought, elaborating, explaining, and insisting, till we have *made* them see what a Saviour Jesus is, and how rich the soul may be that uses His unsearchable wealth.

He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.

Eph. iv. 9.

WE fill a cup or bucket from the bottom upward. And Jesus obeyed a universal law when, in His desire to fill all things, He first descended into the place of a servant, the death of the cross, the lowly bed of a borrowed grave, and thence into the abyss of Hades. "He descended into hell," by which we mean, of course, Hades, the place of disembodied spirits. If we would sit with Him in the heavenlies, we too must be subordinated to the same law. We must also descend.

There is the low place of contrition for sin.—We must go thither; lying in the dust before God; placing the leper's covering on our lips; smiting on our breasts. Be willing that the Spirit of God should reveal all the selfishness, the subtlety, the impurity, of your heart. Let your cry ever be that God would not spare your eyes and heart from the pain of knowing what you are in His sight. From this low place you shall ascend to the bosom of God. "Blessed are they that mourn."

There is the low place of humility.—Be willing to take the lowest place with no mock modesty, but because you have learned to esteem others better than yourself. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Be willing to perform lowly deeds of service to your brethren and sisters in Christ. Reckon that you have not attained. Ascribe all that is good in you to the grace of God. God giveth peace to the humble; He raiseth up the poor out of the dust.

There is the low place of death.—The more we are delivered to the death of Jesus the more will His life be manifested in our mortal flesh. Life through death, ascent after descent, the glory after the cross of shame. "If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children.

Eph. v. 1 (R. V.).

CHILDREN mostly resemble their father. There is often an unmistakable family likeness, which compels the most casual observer to exclaim, "The very image of his father." Oh that in each of us there might be that which would make men think of God!

Put away your former manner of life (iv. 22). —The old man stands for the collection of habits, sayings, and doings which characterized our unregenerate days. The apostle says that they are to be put away suddenly, instantly. Evidently this is possible, or such a command would not be issued. Men speak of a gradual reformation, and advise the piecemeal discontinuance of evil. God, on the contrary, bids us treat the evil past as a company of soldiers would bandits and outlaws. There is the greater reason for this, as the old man waxeth corrupt. Even Martha could not bear the opening of her brother's vault.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind (iv. 23). —We are reminded of Rom. xii. 2. The mind needs to be brought into daily, hourly contact with God's thoughts, as contained in Scripture, that it may be renewed; else our constant association with the men and women of the world, their maxims and practices, will inevitably and sorrowfully deteriorate it. The only source of daily renewal is fellowship with God.

Put on the new man.—Of this the apostle affirms that it is according to God, and has been created. Our Lord created this beauteous dress when He rose from the dead. The day of resurrection was one of creation. All the habits and dispositions of a holy, godlike life have been prepared for us in Him, and await our appropriation; and as they are *according to God*, so soon as we put them on we shall become imitators of God as dear children.

Praying at all seasons in the Spirit.

Eph vi. 18.

THE dying Monod regretted he had not prayed more. We should pray *at all seasons*. Prayer is never out of place. There is no conceivable circumstance in life where it would be inappropriate to pray. At the wedding or the funeral; as we engage in work or finish it; whether the wind blow from the cold north or the balmy south—it is wise and right to pray. “Prayer and provender,” the old proverb says, “hinder no man.”

We should pray *in the Spirit*. Reversing the order of the words, but bringing in their true meaning, we might say, “Let the Spirit pray in the soul.” It is well in prayer to wait until the scum of our own choice and desire has passed off, that the yearnings of the Holy Spirit may arise and manifest themselves. We need to be in the Spirit, not only on the Lord’s Day, but always, that He may be mightily in us, teaching us the will of God.

We should pray *unselfishly*. “For all saints,” said the apostle, “and for me.”

We should *watch*. Do not give runaway knocks. Stand at God’s door till it opens. Be on the alert. Wait on the watch-tower. Many of God’s ships pass in the night, and many of His gifts arrive at the wharf when those to whom they were consigned are asleep or gone.

We should *persevere*. God keeps us waiting that He may test and humble us, and know what is in our heart. Delays are His winnowing fan, discriminating between the chaff and the wheat. What we asked so vehemently we did not ask wisely. When we pray according to His heart, He graciously sustains us. Persevere; you do not know how near you are to the blessing you have sought for years.

To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ . . . to suffer. Phil. i. 29 (R. V.).

THE child of God is often called to suffer, because nothing will convince on-lookers of the reality and power of true religion as suffering will do, when it is borne with Christian resignation and fortitude. And how great the compensations are !

He can keep in such perfect peace. He can make lonely times, when no one is near the couch, to be so full of sweet fellowship and communion. He can put such strong, soft hands under the tired limbs, resting them. He can give refreshment to the spirit when the body is deprived of sleep.

Every one cannot be trusted with suffering. All could not stand the fiery ordeal. They would speak rashly and complainingly. So the Master has to select with careful scrutiny the branches which can stand the knife ; the jewels which can bear the wheel. It is *given* to some to preach, to others to work, but to others to suffer. Accept it as a gift from His hand. Look up and take each throb of pain, each hour of agony, as His gift. Dare to thank Him for it. Look inside the envelope of pain for the message it enfolds. It is a rough packing-case, but there is treasure in it.

And can you not minister to other sufferers ? Can you not dictate letters of comfort, or pray for them, or devise little alleviations and surprises for those who have not what you have ? Suffering is on Christ's behalf ; it must, then, be intended as part of that great ministry for the world in which He, with His saints, is engaged. There is a sense in which all suffering, borne in the spirit of Calvary, helps men, not in the way of atonement or propitiation, of course, but by the exhibition of the power of God's grace in the sufferer.

He was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. Phil. ii. 26.

SOME have identified Epaphroditus here with Epaphras in the Epistle to the Colossians. Here he is represented as sorrowful, even to agony, because his friends had heard of his illness, and he would have wished that no one should be burdened on his account. But in the other epistle he is represented as always striving for the saints in prayer.

It is very beautiful to discover his unwillingness to have his sickness published. When we are in trouble it is best not to speak much of it, save to God. "Only inexperienced sufferers are voluble; those familiar with the secrets of anguish are silent." Let us anoint the head, and wash the face, that we may not appear unto men to fast, but to the Father who is in secret; and our Father who seeth in secret will Himself reward openly. The Comforter will draw near, will whisper His own consolations, and amid much sorrow we shall be calm and strong.

But with Epaphras there was probably another thought. He knew that the Philippians were bearing a very heavy load of sorrow. It was a hard and difficult fight for them, as for him. And with much generosity he was most unwilling that the news of his illness should add a feather-weight to their grief.

This eagerness to conceal pain, lest it should add sorrow to those who already have almost as much as they can bear, is very characteristic of noble souls. And we may quote here Robert Hall's words, on recovering from a keen paroxysm of anguish: "I have not complained, have I, sir? No, and I will not complain." How much of God's strength and comfort we miss in our incessant endeavor to secure the support which notoriety for pain and privation may bring from our fellows!

The working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself. *Phil. iii. 21 (R. V.).*

WHAT cannot He do? From the dust of mother Earth He was able to build up man in the image of God, in the first creation; and from the dust to which death shall again reduce us He will build up again our bodies in the likeness of His resurrection body. The formless clay shall be obliged to yield to His voice, His touch; and if He can do this, what can He not do?

There may be sins within your heart that have long resisted control. Do with them as you will, they still defy you. So long have they been entrenched within the citadel of your soul that, like the Jebusites in the days of David, they laugh you to scorn. But if you will hand over the conflict to Jesus, He will subdue them; He will bring them under His strong, subjecting hand. Be of good cheer. What you cannot do, He can. Whenever the old temptation arises, directly you are aware of it, lift your heart instantly to Jesus, and reckon on Him to cope with it in your behalf. The Lord will fight for you, whilst you shall hold your peace.

So with other difficulties in your life. The raising of a noble nature and character within you; the calling of souls, by your voice, from the death of sin to a life of righteousness; the bringing forth of a fair and well-ordered work from one which seems mere chaos and ruin—all such things are within the scope of this wonderful text. They must be easy to Him who from the dust of death can raise a body ethereal enough to be the home and vehicle of the new celestial life, which shall unfold into perfect beauty in His presence. Repeat the words until the rhythm charms away your doubts, “He is able to subject all things unto Himself.”

BLACK care ! It has always been among men, and perhaps more so to-day than ever, when the pressure of life is heavier and the constraint of circumstances more imperious. Are there not hours in which the clouds gather densely over the Ark of God, and the stoutest hearts tremble ? Is it easy for even the Christian soul to look on a family of little ones, sleeping soundly, and know that they will certainly awake hungry for food, of which the cupboard is bare, and have no tinge of anxiety ?

It is at such times that the apostle bids us pray. "Make your requests known unto God." We have not to agonize before Him, as though, like the priests of Baal, who cried and cut themselves, we shall move Him by our anguish. Calmly, quietly, simply, make your requests known. Take your burden into His presence and lay it down there. He is your Father. He who made the body, and gave it you, will see to the supply of its needs. Your health, your children, the condition of His Church, are dear to Him who notices a falling sparrow, and by whom the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

We shall not escape life's discipline. We may expect to abound here, and to be abased there. But amid all, Peace, God's white-winged sentinel-angel, shall come down to keep the heart with its affections, the mind with its thoughts. Worry, unrest, anxiety, will stand without, as the noise of the street breaks in vain on the double windows of the city counting house, whilst the child of God learns humbly and patiently the lesson of his Father's love. Careful for nothing ; prayerful and thankful in everything.

The riches of the glory of this mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col. i. 27.

THE only son of a widow runs off to sea when quite a lad. She must needs work for her living, and takes lodgers in her little home. After years have passed, a bronzed and bearded sailor comes to her door for accommodation, which she gladly affords at an agreed price. She has no idea who has come to dwell beneath her roof—it is a secret, a *mystery*.

By and by, one day as they are sitting at the midday meal, a remark, a gesture, startles her; she looks hard into the stranger's face, recognizes him, and, with a cry, rushes into his arms and weeps out on his bosom her joy: "My son, my son, what deceived my old eyes, that I didn't know thee!" That is the *glory* of the mystery, which breaks in smiles and kisses.

Then he says, "Mother, how hard life has gone with you; your hands are hard with toil. But see, I have plenty of money, and you shall go shares in all. I will take a nice little home, and you shall live there, to keep it as long as you live, and never have to do a stroke of hard toil." That is the *riches* of the glory of the mystery.

So at your conversion Jesus came into your heart to abide. Too long He has been unrecognized; but of late you have been made aware of the nature and worth of your Heavenly Friend. The mystery has broken in light. Henceforth, realize that all His riches are yours, to be shared and enjoyed; that all your needs may be fully met, even to the abundance of His unsearchable riches; and that there may be an end forever to all the weary sense of inability and incompetence to meet the inevitable demands of daily living. Christ is in you; let His life within reach out its hands to the life of glory above.

*As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord,
so walk in Him.* Col. ii. 6 (R. V.).

WHEN we were first brought to Jesus, we received Him into our hearts by faith. Throwing open the door, we bade Him be welcome; and He came in never to depart again. Though He was viewless as the wind, and silent as light, He came. And there was a perfume as of myrrh, aloes, and cassia; like that which fills the ivory palaces of eternity.

Now the apostle says that all our after Christian life is to be lived on the same principle. The holy life is not an *attainment*, but an *attitude*. Holiness is not an acquirement of which we may make a boast, but an openness of soul toward the Lord Jesus, as of a window unshuttered and uncurtained to the light. The believer is never independent of Jesus; but at every moment he is receiving out of His fullness, and grace upon grace. He does not receive his qualities and attributes as things apart from the Lord Jesus; but receiving Him, he obtains them. The holy man is he who has learned the art of receiving Jesus; the holier, who has a greater capacity, through humility and faith; the holiest, he who can receive most of the life of the Son of God.

Our daily life is here compared to a walk. We cannot choose it. There is no alternative but to take what God has marked out for you; though you may choose your atmosphere, or, to use a modern word, your environment. Every step may be taken in Christ; rooted in Him as a tree in rich soil; builded up as a house on a rock; inhaling His very breath as the life of life. And whatever the need may be which the exigencies of the path suggest, there is always an abundant supply in the Lord Jesus, in whom all treasures are hid. He teaches us that we may *know*; He indwells that we may *be*.

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called. Col. iii. 15.

THE peace of God is the peace of the Divine nature—the very tranquillity which prevails in the heart of the God of Peace. It was of this that Jesus spoke when He said, “My peace I give unto you”; for His own being was filled and blessed with it during His earthly career. In each of us may be a sea of glass, reflecting on its pellucid and tranquil bosom the untroubled calm and rest, which are unspeakable because eternal and Divine. “The Lord of peace Himself give you peace always.”

There are three things against which we must ever be on our guard, lest they rob us of our peace. First, unconfessed sin; second, worry; third, the permission of an unrebuked selfish principle. As on the Sabbath the good Nehemiah carefully excluded the Tyrian fishwives from Jerusalem, lest they should mar its spirit of rest by their cries and traffic, so we must preserve an unbroken Sabbath-keeping within. “There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”

The apostle says, Let it rule. The Greek word means *arbitrate*. Whenever there is a doubtful issue to be decided, and by one course your peace may be disturbed, whilst by another it may be maintained, choose those things that make for peace, whether for yourselves or others. Let God's peace act as umpire.

At the same time, this does not mean peace at any price. When the cause of truth is assailed, or the rights of others invaded, we must stand up boldly and strongly for Righteousness. Then the effect of Righteousness will be Peace. Melchizedek was first King of Righteousness, and after that King of Peace.

Always striving for you in his prayers . . . he hath much labor for you. Col. iv. 12, 13 (R. V.).

THIS is a very beautiful epitaph on a good man's life. He had come from Colosse with tidings for the apostle; but amid all the crowding interests of his visit to Rome his heart was with his friends, and he sought to help them, as we may all help dear ones far away.

He *strove* for them in prayer. It was no run-away knock that he gave; no light breathing of desire; no formal mention of their names: but it seemed as though he were a wrestler, whose muscles stood out like whipcord as he agonized for the prize. He *labored*. We shall never know, till we stand in the clear light of heaven, how much has been wrought in the world by prayer. Here, at least, there is mention of a man's labors. Probably the work on the results of which we are wont to pride ourselves is due less to us than we suppose, and more to unrecognized fellow-laborers.

There is a pretty legend which tells of the dream of a great preacher who was marvellously used of God, and inclined to magnify himself and his gifts; but who was instructed by an angel of God that his success was entirely attributable to a poor widow, who sat regularly in the free seats at the foot of his pulpit, and who never ceased to pray for him. May the writer ask of any who receive benefit from these words to *labor* and *strive* for him in prayer to God.

Let us be careful to mingle much intercession with all our prayers, especially on the behalf of missionaries and lonely workers in foreign lands, that they may realize that we are actually working and laboring beside them, though many thousands of miles intervene.

To wait for His Son from heaven.

1 Thess. i. 10.

OH blessed hope! Is it not wonderful that each of the chapters of this Epistle brims over with the glad anticipation of the Master's quick return!

We should never lose this spirit of eager longing and waiting. It hath the promise of the life that now is, as of that which is to come. It lifts above the darkness of the present age; links the present with the great future; comforts us amid bereavement with the hope of speedy reunion; quickens us to watchfulness and consecration by the thought of the shortening of our opportunities; leads us to purify ourselves as He is pure, to gird our loins and trim our lamps.

Notice how closely the apostle combines the *service* of the living and true God, herein distinguishing Him from the dumb, dead stones of heathen idolatries, with this *waiting* for His Son from heaven. It has been alleged that the hope of the Second Advent is a dreamy, mystical sentiment, which disqualifies one for the active fulfillment of the duties of life. Nothing could be further from the truth. Those who cherish that anticipation, who awake in the morning, saying, "Perhaps it will be to-day"; who go to their sleep whispering to their hearts, "Perchance I shall be changed into His likeness in a moment as I sleep, and wake in my resurrection body"—these are among the most devoted, strenuous, and successful workers of the Church. They are not recognized in the daily or religious Press; but God knows and honors them.

"Oh, blessed Hope! With this elate,
Let not our hearts be desolate;
But strong in faith and patience, wait
Until He come."

*What is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying?
Are not even ye?*

1 Thess. ii. 19.

THE tender heart of the apostle suffered keenly in his enforced absence from these beloved converts. He had cherished them as a nurse her children; he would have gladly imparted to them his own soul. Not once nor twice he had sought to see them again, but had been hindered by malign spiritual forces that were very real to him. He found comfort, however, in the thought that, at the Lord's coming, they and he would be reunited, and that they would be his joy, as now they were his hope. Now they lit his hope to an intenser passion; then they would intensify his joy to a more exquisite fullness.

But there is a further thought. The souls whom he had won for Jesus were to constitute his crown. It was as though they would be woven into a wreath like that given to the ancient athlete, and placed on his brow as he emerged from the terrific conflict of his life—not to be worn there, but cast forthwith at the feet of his Lord. What an incentive was this! Each soul plucked from the enemy would be another jewel for the Master's crown, and herein a fresh source of heavenly blessedness to himself.

I remember Mr. Spurgeon telling of an old Christian woman in his almshouses, who persisted in saying loving thoughts about her beloved pastor to his face, at which he greatly demurred. He feared that she was making more of him than of Christ. But she said sweetly, "It is written in the Song, 'Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit two hundred'; so, dear pastor, you must have your two hundred." Yes, it will be so; we shall partake with Jesus of the fish that we have caught; we shall have fellowship in His exceeding joy over the saved.

No man should be moved by these afflictions ; for . . . we are appointed thereunto. 1 Thess. iii. 3.

WE all love the sunshine, but the Arabs have a proverb that "all sunshine makes the desert"; and it is a matter for common observation that the graces of Christian living are more often apparent in the case of those who have passed through great tribulation. God desires to get as rich crops as possible from the soil of our natures. There are certain plants of the Christian life, such as meekness, gentleness, kindness, humility, which cannot come to perfection if the sun of prosperity always shines.

We often shrank from the lessons set us at school, and looked out of the windows, longing for the hour of release. But now how thankful we are for the tutors and governors, appointed by our parents, who kept us steadily at our tasks. We feel almost kindly to the schoolmaster or mistress that we dreaded. And, similarly, one day we shall be glad for those hard lessons acquired from the horn-book of pain. "We have had fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, who chastens for our profit, and live?"

The tears of those who suffer according to the will of God are spiritual lenses and windows of agate. As the weights of the clock or the ballast in the vessel are necessary for their right ordering, so is trouble in the soul-life. The sweetest scents are only obtained by tremendous pressure; the fairest flowers grow amid Alpine snow-solitudes; the rarest gems have suffered longest from the lapidary's wheel; the noblest statues have borne most blows of the chisel. All, however, is under law. Nothing happens that has not been *appointed* with consummate care and foresight.

Sorrow not, even as the rest, which have no hope.

1 Thess. iv. 13 (R. V.).

NATURE will have her due. Tears will fall, and hearts seem near to breaking. Nowhere does God chide the tears of natural affection; how could He, since it is written that "Jesus wept"? But He sets Himself to extract their bitterness. Sorrow you may, and must; but not as without hope.

Those who die in Christ are with Him.—They are said to sleep, not because they are unconscious, but because their decease was as devoid of terror as an infant's slumbers. Believers have all died once in Christ, and it was necessary to find a word which, whilst significant of death, was not death, in order to describe the moment of our farewell to this world and birth into the next. This word was furnished by Death's twin-sister Sleep. The catacombs are covered with the brief significant sentence, *Obdormivit in Christo* (He slept in Christ). But just as in sleep the spirit is conscious, of which dreams bear witness, so in the last sleep. Absent from the body, we shall be present with the Lord.

Those who die in Christ will come with Him.—They are now waiting around Him till He give the final order for the whole heavenly cortège, which has been collecting for ages, to move. The holy angels will accompany; but the beloved saints shall ride in the chariots of God as the bride beside the bridegroom.

Those who die in Christ shall be forever reunited with us who wait for Him and them.—They shall come with Him. "God will bring them." We, on the other hand, if we are living at that supreme moment, shall be changed and caught up to meet Him and them; and then, all one in Christ, we shall be forever with Him, to go no more out.

The God of Peace Himself sanctify you wholly.

1 Thess. v. 23, 24 (R. V.).

OUR God has set Himself the work of our sanctification. As the Greek indicates, He looks upon us as His inheritance, and He will not rest until He has brought every acre of territory under cultivation. It is not enough that briars and thistles should be exterminated; they must be replaced by the rare growth of Christian virtue, which is Christ.

The work of sanctification is quiet and silent.

—It is wrought by the *God of Peace*. The mightiest forces of nature are stilled; and when God comes with power into the human spirit there is often no hurricane, tempest, fire, or earthquake, but the thrilling whisper of the still, small voice. Do not be afraid, as though God would treat you roughly. So long as peaceful, gentle methods will effect His purpose, He will gladly employ them.

The work is also gradual.—We are not made *faultless*, but preserved *blameless*; *i. e.*, we are kept from known sin, preserved from incurring perpetual self-reproach. “There is no condemnation.” I saw the other day the love-letter of a little boy to his father. It was anything but faultless; but the father, at least, did not count it worthy of blame, since he carried it next his heart. So we are not to be faultless, as judged by God’s perfect standard, till we are presented before the presence of His glory; but we may be blameless up to our acquaintance with the Divine will.

The work is from within outward.—Notice the order—spirit, soul, body. The Shechinah of His presence shines in the holy of holies, and thence pours over into the holy place, and so into the outer court, until the very curtains of the body are irradiated with its light. *He will do it.*

That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you.
2 Thess. i. 12 (R. V.).

WILL you, dear Christian soul, enter into a solemn compact with the Holy Spirit that you will live for this as your supreme purpose, namely, to glorify the name (*i. e.*, the character) of the Lord Jesus? This is *his* supreme purpose and aim throughout the present age. He seeks the glory of Jesus with the same persistent patience as Jesus sought the glory of His Father, and longs for our fellowship and coöperation. Nothing gratifies the Holy Spirit more than to welcome into partnership those who love the Lord Jesus with a consuming passion, and are prepared to glorify Him, at whatever cost to themselves.

It has made a great difference to my life since I responded to the call of the Spirit, as though He said directly, as once through His servant, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together." One has now a worthy object always in view, whether in speaking or keeping silence; in acting or suffering; in life or death—that the Lord Jesus may be magnified.

Does this seem too high an aim? Then ponder the gracious assurance that the Lord will fulfill every desire of goodness (ver. 11). He first instills the desire, and then realizes it; first suggests the outline plan, and then fills in the colors. Take your desires for goodness to Him, and trust Him, in all faithfulness, to realize and fulfill them. They are like the chalice which the child brings to the lake-side; impure, indeed, but capable of being rinsed; and the father, taking it from its hand, plunges it into the pellucid waters, that cleanse and fill to the brim. Thank God for every desire of goodness! But be not content till that which you desire is in actual possession; for He who prompts the desire is well able to fulfill it.

God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.

2 Thess. ii. 13.

FROM the beginning ! Who shall compute the contents of the vast unknown abyss, which is comprehended in that phrase ? The beginning of creation was preceded by the anticipation of Redemption, and the love of God to all who were one with Christ.

God's aim and purpose. Salvation.—Not simply our deliverance from the penalty, but from the power of all besetting sin ; so that we may be delivered from the fear of our enemies, and serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. This He is prepared to *give* to us ; but we must claim it by faith.

God's choice.—Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate. From all eternity He saw those who would be attracted to Jesus by a Divine affinity, and these were included in His gift to the Son. “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me, and they have kept Thy word.” We must not presume on the eternal choice ; but we may be very grateful that the tendencies emanating from the fall are met, in mid-flow, by the grace and choice of the Almighty.

God's method. Through sanctification of the Spirit.—The Holy Ghost sets us apart from sin, and consecrates us to God. “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own ? For ye are bought with a price.” Our sanctification is not the property of our soul, but its possession of the Holy One ; not an attribute, but a Person. *And belief of the truth.* Let the Word of God dwell in you richly. Hide it in your heart, that you may be kept from sin. We are sanctified by the truth in so far as we expose our hearts to its entrance and rule. We are cleansed by the washing of water through the Word.

The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

2 Thess. iii. 5.

“DIRECT” might be rendered “make straight.” It is used of the apostle’s own coming to these beloved converts in 1 Thess. iii. 11. It is as though he asked that their hearts might travel easily and swiftly along the road which leads into the love of God, and the patience which, untiring, waits for Christ.

The love of God.—We urgently need, for many reasons, to be brought into the love of God. Only so can our selfishness be conquered and expelled ; only so can we become like God in our daily life and conversation ; only this is the complete evidence to the world that our holy religion is true ; only thus shall we have power to influence the lost and fallen ; only so can we know God, “for he that loveth not, knoweth not God.” But how can we learn to love ? God alone can teach us and guide our way into this sacred art. His Holy Spirit must fill our hearts with His love ; we must ever claim and receive it as our power for daily self-sacrifice, and we must be prepared to take every opportunity of sharing the love of God in unselfishness and thoughtfulness for those with whom we come in contact.

The Patience of Christ.—Thus the original might be rendered ; and the beloved disciple confesses himself a brother and companion in the patience of Jesus Christ (Rev. i. 9). We all know something of this. Longing for answers to prayers that are still delayed ; yearning for the realization of hopes and ideals of which God’s Spirit has spoken to us ; waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. May we be led into something of that sublime faith and patience with which Jesus *sits*, until all things are put under Him, and He is satisfied.

Sinners, of whom I am chief.

1 Tim. i. 15.

IF the elephant can go safely over the swaying bridge, the horse and mule can; and the apostle seems to glory that in the very beginning of the progress of the Gospel through the world it had laid hold of and converted himself, because if he had been saved, any one might be. As men have been brought under conviction, in successive ages, it has been a profound consolation to learn that the chief of sinners has been in heaven for eighteen hundred years. In him first Jesus Christ showed forth "all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe."

Without doubt Paul never forgot the excess of his hatred and persecutions toward the infant Church. But probably he alludes here also to the deepening consciousness of unworthiness and sinfulness which accompanies all progress toward the knowledge and love of God. This phase of experience may be accounted for thus. The true saint of God, though certain of forgiveness, reviews his past sins in the light of that purity of which he is ever obtaining truer perceptions, and thus recognizes shades of evil in them which a slighter knowledge of God had failed to reveal. He also feels himself a greater sinner than others, because he supposes that God cannot have treated another with the same forbearance and mercy as have been extended to himself; and the greater the love the more heinous the transgression. And in addition, as subtler forms of temptation are suggested to him, and to every one, he knows that there are kindred susceptibilities within him, even though they are abhorred and resisted. It is beneath the pressure of such thoughts that he recognizes his uttermost indebtedness to the grace of God.

That supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men. 1 Tim. ii. 1.

A LIFE is revealed here of which many of us know practically nothing. We do not feel the absolute necessity of being much alone in the presence of God, not so much for ourselves, as for others; and this sad neglect of intercessory prayer, which we all deplore, really points to a lack of the divine life, since if that were mightily within us we should inevitably feel its throb and pulse in this direction. This comes out clearly in the words that follow.

Intercession is necessary that we may know the secrets of *a quiet, peaceable, and godly life* (ver. 2).

Such intercession for others is *good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour* (ver. 3). And the word translated *good* might be rendered *beautiful*.

It is consonant with the Divine purpose, for God *wishes* to have all men saved (ver. 4). If, then, His Spirit is within us, we, too, shall long that men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Our hearts will be filled with a Divine tenderness of yearning which will find vent in strong cryings and tears. It is only thus we can live in harmony within the Divine purpose. One writes: "When I think of this, I feel I must pray. Oh, how near it brings to God to pray in the Spirit, and leads me to see that no pressure of duty among men can free us from the absolute need of much prayer."

Such intercession is in profound union with *the mediation of our Lord* (vers. 5, 6).—As the great High Priest He ever liveth to intercede; and in our little measure we, too, as members of a holy priesthood, must blend our supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks with His (1 Peter ii. 5).

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.
1 Tim. iii. 16.

IT is more than likely that this is a fragment of one of the earliest hymns of the Church. In her hymns, and maintenance of the ordinances, she thus becomes the pillar and ground of the truth. The words "mystery of godliness" are probably a general heading which is further unfolded and expanded in the six following sentences, which may have been sung antiphonally:—

" God was manifest in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit.
Seen of angels,
Preached unto the Gentiles.
Believed on in the world,
Received up into glory."

The Extremes of Manifestation.—The Eternal Word was manifested in the flesh. But it was not simply a physical manifestation; we cannot forget the descent of the Holy Spirit at His baptism, or the authentication of His words which the Spirit gave in signs and wonders, and convinced hearts, and converted lives.

The Extremes of Created Intelligence.—Angels worship Him; and Gentiles, sunk in heathen darkness, hear the story of His wondrous love. Jesus is the centre of all worlds: from heaven's bright spaces they come to Him on the one hand; from earth's dark sins they come on the other. In Him meet angels and men.

The Extremes of Space.—Glory is above: "He was received up into glory." The world is but a speck, a mote in the beam of eternity. How great the space between the two! But the feet of our Emmanuel have trodden its low pavement, and He has now taken to Himself His former glory. Like Jacob's ladder, He links earth with the throne of God.

Every creature of God is good . . . if it be received with thanksgiving. 1 Tim. iv. 4.

WE must be very careful in applying these words. Intoxicating liquor, for instance, is sometimes described as "a good creature of God." But surely that term is not legitimate. Whatever grounds there may be for defending its use, can this text be alleged as one? For there is a great deal of human manipulation in its preparation. Before it reaches our lips, it is greatly altered by the process of fermentation. It can hardly be called God's good creature.

When we are quite sure that we are dealing with one of God's pure and unadulterated gifts, such as human love, friendship, the beauties of nature, wholesome food, fresh young spirits, the innocent mirth of the Christmas home-gathering; we must distinguish between God's gifts and our abuse of them; between His creation and our distortion of it. There are things in our lives which are not His creation or gift, and which we must resolutely refuse and put away. There are others which come to us clearly and absolutely from His hand.

Rejoice in every good thing which the Lord gives.—Rejoice! Do not enjoy things as though under the sword of Damocles, suspended by a thread.

Be careful to maintain the spirit of thanksgiving and prayer.—What you can thank God for or use in His name and for His glory; what lifts you from the gift to the Giver, or is capable of being prayed over, with no shadow of misgiving, is innocent and healthy.

Watch only against the intrusion of self.—Whatever you place between yourself and God, or rest on apart from God, or make the aim and centre of your life, is hurtful and must pass through the fire. The way to rid yourself of its poison is to insist on making it a subject of thanksgiving.

She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God.

1 Tim. v. 5.

ART thou desolate indeed, because the light of thine eyes has passed from view, leaving thee immeasurably lonely? Dear soul, do not look down into the grave which has received the precious mortal frame, but up into the face of God.

He lent thee thy beloved. From the time of the first knitting of soul with soul he was but a loan for a specified time; and wouldst thou not rather have had him for so short a time than not at all? Wouldst thou not have said, had God asked thee, "I would rather have a year or month of such love as his than none"? Do not be angry, because God has done as He always intended.

Besides, that beloved one is still thine. Thy love so entered into his heart that it could not be eradicated, though ages should pass. Do not suppose that death is so mighty a magician as to alter the very nature of those who pass for a moment beneath His wand.

And God will care for thee. Trust Him for society, that thou be not lonely; for the provision of what is necessary to thy support; and for the protecting love which thy shrinking nature calls for. Thy Maker will be thy husband.

Wouldst thou be comforted, continue in prayers and supplications for others night and day. Cease to shut thyself up with thy sorrow, and go out to minister comfort to those who sorrow as without hope. A Hindoo story tells of a bereaved mother, who was advised to obtain a handful of corn from a house where there was no trouble, and was so occupied in seeking it, and in comforting the inmates of the various homes she visited, that her own grief was assuaged.

Nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.

1 Tim. vi. 17.

THE contrast here is very beautiful. Men, for the most part, look to riches to supply them with all they need richly to enjoy ; but the apostle says that it is beyond all comparison better to look away from dead coin to a living Person, who takes pleasure in giving liberally without upbraiding.

Here is a rebuke.—Supposing you had your cellars filled with gold coin, would you not think yourself secure against all possible need and care ? Almost certainly you would. But you ought to be even more at rest, since you have neither silver nor gold, and only your Heavenly Father's hand.

Here is a contrast.—Riches are uncertain at the best. A man in these difficult days finds it easier to gain money than to hold it. He who is rich to-day may awake to-morrow to find that some sudden turn of the market has made him poor. But God is not uncertain. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. His covenants are certainties.

Here is an appeal.—Trust in the living God with as much restfulness as others in their lands and revenues, and be almost glad if God takes away from you what you have clung to so tenaciously, that you may drop securely into His everlasting arms. You smile at the story of the lady who was told by the captain that he had done all he could for the vessel, and they must now look to the Almighty ; and who replied, “ O captain, has it come to that ? ” But you may be nearer akin to her spirit than you suppose !

Here is an assured destiny.—Those who trust in riches are pierced through with many sorrows, and are caught in the maelstrom, which drowns souls in perdition ; they who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed.

He is able to keep my deposit. . . . The good deposit, keep. 2 Tim. i. 12, 14 (R. V., marg.).

THERE is a double deposit here, and the comparison comes out clear and marked in the Greek. When we give our most precious treasure into the custodianship of Jesus, He turns to honor us by entrusting His own treasure to our care. Oh that we might be as eager to keep that which He entrusts to us, as He is that which we entrust to Him; so that He might be able to say of us, "I know them in whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that they will never fail to do whatever needs to be done for My honor and glory."

Our deposit with Christ.—What is the true policy of life? How can I best spend these few years to the best advantage? What is there beyond, and beyond? Such questions come to all earnest souls, and greatly trouble them, till they entrust the keeping of their souls and the direction of their lives into the hands of the faithful Saviour. We feel sure that He has the words of eternal life, and that all power is given to Him in heaven and on earth. At first there is something of a venture—we trust Him; next, there is the knowledge which comes from experience—we know Him; lastly, there is strong confidence—we are *persuaded* that He is able.

Christ's deposit with us.—And what is this? 1 Tim. vi. 20, 14, iv. 16, suggests the answer. To every believer Jesus hands the custody of His honor, His Gospel, His Father's glory, His holy day, the ordinances which He bequeathed to the Church. As Ezra charged the priests to bear safely through the desert march the sacred vessels, so our Captain charges us, and throughout the whole Bible rings the injunction: "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord."

Meet for the Master's use.

2 Tim. ii. 21.

THIS I would be, O Lord, clay though I am. Be Thou my potter. Make of me what Thou canst and by what process Thou wilt, only let me be what Thou canst use.

Art thou able to drink the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

By Thy grace I am able. Let me die with Thee; lie in the grave of obscurity and neglect; be counted as the off-scouring of all things; be broken on the edge of Thy wheel; pass through the fire of Thy hottest kiln—only let me be one whom Thou choosest and usest, constantly in Thy hand; dipped down often into the brimming well, and back to Thy dear lips, or to the lips of whom Thou lovest.

The spirit is willing, My child, but the flesh is weak.

I know it, I know it, Lord. But I desire to die to the weakness of the flesh, its ache, its tears, its faintness, that I may live in the Spirit. Is not Thy grace sufficient? Is not Thy strength perfected in weakness? Is not the residue of the Spirit with Thee, to give without measure? Heed not my weak cryings, but perfect that which concerneth me. Only make me a vessel that Thou canst use.

He that would be great, let him be as he that doth serve.

I understand Thee, Master. Thou wouldst winnow my heart, and rid me of all that is proud and selfish. It is true that in the time past I have sought great things for myself: but that is gone now: I am but a weaned babe: my only desire is for Thee, for Thy glory, for the magnifying of Thy name: my one cry to be often, always, in Thy hand.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

2 Tim. iii. 16.

LITERALLY the words stand, All Scripture, God-breathed and profitable. It is a remarkable expression, reminding of the early record, "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." *The breath of God has entered these holy words, and they live.*

This makes Scripture fragrant.—I write these words beneath the leafy shadow of an oak-tree, on a ridge of hill commanding the Weald of Kent. The summer breeze is hurrying past. Since it left the southern sea it has passed over miles of fragrant country, imbibing the sweet scents of flower gardens, orchards, and hop-gardens; lading it with perfume, which makes it an ecstasy to inhale. Ah, fragrant breeze, how thou remindest me of those holy thoughts which are wafted to me from the orchards of Paradise, whensoever I open the sacred Word!

This makes it refreshing.—On this hot summer day the heat would be overpowering but for this delightful breeze, which fans the cheek and cools the atmosphere. The current is always changing, hence the refreshment. And the Word of God is always fresh and interesting, because the Spirit of God is perpetually passing into and through it, bringing His own life to us, and through us to the world.

This makes it beautiful.—The effect of the wind, in the music of the leaves above, the swaying of the grasses at my feet, the rustling of yonder golden corn across the beaten foot-path, adds an element of incomparable delight. There is new meaning, movement, music, in it all. And it is only as the Divine breath breathes through apostles and prophets, that, like great organ-pipes, they become resonant with heavenly music.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing.

2 Tim. iv. 1.

PROFESSOR RENDEL HARRIS reminds us that an early piece of Christian literature, called the Second Epistle of Clement, opens with these words: "Brethren, we ought to think of Jesus Christ as God, as the Judge of quick and dead. And we ought not to think meanly of our salvation; for when we think meanly of Him, meanly also do we expect to receive." In the view of this holy soul there was a very deep and necessary connection between creed and character. Those who esteem Him most worthily will derive most from Him.

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary to holiness.—Unless we think of Christ as the Ideal Man, in whom there was no flaw or stain, how can we make Him the model of our daily life? Unless we think of Him as the Son of God, able to subdue all things to Himself, how can we dare to hope to become like Him? "I should die, O my Lord," cried a saint in a moment of religious ecstasy, "if I thought that I should fail of loving Thee with all my heart."

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary to prayer.—He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the Rewarder. Be-think thee well before thou openest thy lips in the first entreaty, who He is whom thou addressdest, and forthwith great and far-reaching petitions will naturally form themselves within thine heart.

Large thoughts of Christ are necessary for Christian work.—The solid belief that Christ has redeemed our race, and that the Father has given Him the kingdom over all the world, is absolutely necessary before there can be any enthusiastic effort on our part to make Him King and secure for Him actually the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

According to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth. Titus i. 1 (R. v.).

THESE seem to have been the two guiding stars of the apostle's life—faith and knowledge. Some are afraid of the conjunction. The men of faith are afraid of science, and the men of science often despise faith. But they are not antagonistic.

Faith.—The faith that inspires all elect souls is one and the same. In some there may be more, in others less; but its attitude toward God and its phases of experience, trial, and triumph, are the same in all who believe. In addition to this, the general facts and truths on which our faith lays hold, and from which it extracts its nourishment, are the same: and it is a comfort to know that these have been passed on from age to age from the earliest days, and that we are called to believe in them, and hold them fast.

Knowledge of the Truth.—We need not fear or shun knowledge, which is simply the exploring and discovery of the ways and thoughts of God. "Let knowledge grow from more to more." Only let her always concern herself with the great facts and methods of God's universe, rather than with human speculation and fancy. There is a distinction between knowledge and wisdom. The one may be only intellectual; the other is always moral. Those who pretend to know are not always wise; but the wise always know.

Godliness.—True knowledge will make you godly, reverent, devout; filling you with the Spirit of God within, and with likeness to God without. It is only as you are godly, that you will really be wise and know things that are hidden from the wise and prudent. True knowledge leads to godliness, and godliness back to knowledge.

Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity.

Titus ii. 14.

AFTER all that we have professed and learned, how hard it is to believe that God intends just what He says! When the Holy Spirit says *all*, He clearly means ALL. And we are, therefore, taught that the death of Jesus was intended, not for our forgiveness and justification merely, but for our sanctification, and our deliverance from the power of all our besetting sins. The text does not promise freedom from temptation; but from all yielding to habits, dispositions, and tempers of soul which have ruthlessly tyrannized over us as Egypt over Israel.

Jesus died for thee, O child of God, that having been set free from the bondage of all iniquity thou mightest live soberly as regards the use of the world, righteously toward thy fellows, and godly toward the Almighty, and "looking for that blessed hope." The grace of God has appeared; His glory will appear. There has been an Epiphany of the one; there shall be as certainly an Epiphany of the other. Many awaited the first; more shall await the second. The one was in humiliation; the other shall be in glory: the one was as a Babe; the other shall be in the glory of the Divine Man. But till then we are called to wait with garments unspotted from the world, and hearts delivered from the love and power of human sin.

Let us teach the world that God has something tangible and practicable to give—not for the next life only, but for this. We are taught by that gentle school-mistress, the Grace of God, to *live*—soberly, as regards our personal life; righteously, in relation to others; godly, in our attitude toward God. Wesley says, "Until you press believers to accept full salvation *now*, you must not look for any revival."

The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.

Titus iii. 4.

THE emphasis must surely rest on *appeared*. Kindness and love toward man were always in the heart of God, but they were not clearly revealed. They might have been perceived in the order of nature and human life; but there are stormy winds as well as zephyrs in the one—and in the other deaths as well as births; knells of hope as well as marriage peals. But in Jesus the true heart of God toward man was manifested. It is thus in human life.

At first God blessed us anonymously.—In Cowper's memoirs we read how Theodora, his cousin, pursued him throughout his sad life with her gifts; but they always came without indication of their source. As the poet unwrapped his new-come treasure, he would say, "Dear Anonymous has come again; God bless him." So, through years of thoughtless childhood, and afterward in opening youth, we were the recipients of myriads of gifts contrived with the most exquisite skill to give us pleasure; but we did not trace them to their source. They were from God.

Since then His grace and loving kindness have appeared.—We have had eyes to see, and hearts to understand. The Anonymous Benefactor is now recognized as our Father and Friend. We no longer praise our earthly loves for our cornfields and vineyards, but our Heavenly Spouse (Hosea ii.). In the breaking of the bread we have recognized the Son of God, and we know now who it was that walked with us along the path of life, and why our hearts burned.

"Oh to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be;
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee."

My very heart.

Philemon 12 (R. V.).

THIS fragment of ancient letter-writing gives us a model of the way in which our commonest or most prosaic dealings, and our letters, even on business matters, may breathe Christ's spirit. It also illustrates the relation in which we stand to Jesus Christ. What Onesimus was to Paul and Philemon combined, that we are to our Lord.

What was Onesimus to Paul?—His child, whom he had begotten in his bonds. He had probably been discovered by some of his companions in the purlieu of Rome, where criminals concealed themselves from justice, and abandoned characters gave vent to the wildest passions. Or, having heard that the apostle, whom he had so often met in his master's house, was residing in his own hired house in Rome, the runaway slave had found him out, when in the extremity of hunger. In either case he had now become dear as the apostle's heart; had learned to minister to him in his bonds; had proved more than a servant—a brother beloved. O Thou who hast redeemed us from our sins, may we be all this to Thee!

What was Onesimus to Philemon?—He had been unprofitable; and we have been. He was sent back; and we have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. He had been a servant, henceforth he should be a beloved brother; and we are no longer servants but friends. He had grievously wronged his master; but his sin had been forgiven, and so covered by over-abounding grace, that it would bring him into a position of greater privilege and blessing than ever before. In this man's sin and restoration we see ourselves. Where our sin abounded, grace has much more abounded, through the tender pity of Him who had put our defalcations to His own account.

Thou art the same.

Heb. i. 12.

THOU art the same, when contrasted with nature.—The solid bases of the hills were laid in their sockets by Thy hands. The blue tapestry of the sky was woven by Thy fingers ; and it is as easy for Thee to lay it aside and substitute new heavens as for us to lay aside a worn-out dress and take another. And as the change of dress does not affect the nature of the wearer, neither will all the changes of creation or nature affect the power of Thine hand or the tenderness of Thy heart. Thou art the same !

Thou art the same, when contrasted with men.—They come and go. The great ones of the past—Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah—stood with Thee for a moment on the earth, and then passed into the great silence. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, wrought for Thee and with Thee, and passed away. Our own teachers and friends have not been suffered to continue by reason of death. One by one they have passed from us ; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail !

Thou art the same, when contrasted with our own moods and impulses.—They are too fitful ; like the morning dew ; like the evening wind. Sometimes we feel we could die for Thee ; at other times we sleep amid Thy sorrows. Emotions, resolutions, methods of thought and action, are permanent only in their changefulness. But Thou art the same—changeless and timeless, our Rock of Ages, our impregnable Fortress and Home !

This was the import of the Burning Bush which flamed out on the hillside in the dark night, but did not burn to the ground. Steadily, constantly, fiercely, the fire shone, but needed no fuel from the tree—symbol of the I AM.

A merciful and faithful High Priest.

Heb. ii. 17.

THE priesthood of Jesus stretches like the sky from the horizon of the past to that of the eternal future. It covers all we know of Him.

In the days that preceded His incarnation.—We are told that the priesthood of Melchizedek was made like that of the Son of God (Heb. vii. 3), from which it is clear that all the apparatus of priesthood within and without the Jewish system was some faint imagining forth of the priestly mediation and intercession of the Saviour. The eternal temple was reared, the incense of intercession ascended, the sacrifice of the Lamb was slain, before the first thin spiral of smoke rose from Moriah's summit.

In the days of His earthly ministry.—At the Passover, when the High Priest had finished the sacred rites, he came forth to the people, and said, "Now ye are clean." In John xv. 3 Jesus addressed His disciples in the same words. His authority to forgive sins; His quick sympathy, and likeness to His brethren; His frequent prayers; His intercessions for sinners, as when He pleaded for His crucifiers; His intercessions for the tempted, as when He prayed for Peter; His intercessions for His own, as in the matchless John xvii.; His reference to the shedding of blood; the whole circumstances of His death—show His priestly attitude, which culminated in His passing within the vail.

In the days of the present dispensation.—The divine apostle tells us that he saw Christ clothed in a vesture to the foot, and employs this specific word for high-priestly dress. He saw Him engaged in priestly ministry; and in a subsequent vision tells us that he saw Him mingle much incense with the prayer of saints, and present them before God.

WHO are to consider Him?—"Holy brethren." Because we are the brethren of Jesus, we must consider our Brother. Because we are brethren with all, whom He brothers, we should emulate the saints of all ages in their eager gaze at Christ. We must possess the holiness without which none can see the Lord, and we must live in holy love with all who bear the name of Christ. Do you lack either of these? This is the reason why your eyes are blinded. Step out of the mist into the clear prospect:—

"A step,
A single step, shall free you from the skirts
Of the blind vapor, and open to your view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul."

What right have they to consider Him?—Because they are "partakers of a heavenly calling." They have turned from the world, from the fascinations of the sin and the flesh; they are seeking the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. Surely such have a right, given them of grace, to live in daily personal vision of their King!

In what aspects should they consider Him?—As *Apostle*, whom God has *sent* out of His bosom to man, and whom man sends back to God. As *Priest*, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, who bears our needs and sins and sorrows on His heart. As the *Son*, compared with whom Moses was but a servant. As *Creator*, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not anything made. As the *Head* of the household of those who believe. As the *All-faithful* One, who will never resign His charge. Consider Jesus in each of these aspects, and rejoice in Him.

There remaineth, therefore, a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

Heb. iv. 19 (R. V.).

THERE is a rest for weary souls.—God speaks of it as His Rest. He entered it, we are told, when He had finished His work, and beheld it to be very good ; and ever since the door has been standing open for the travel-stained, weary children of men to enter it. To every other creation-day there were evening and morning, but not to this ; it partakes of the nature of eternity in its timeless bliss.

Let us rejoice that this rest remaineth.—Of course, the Sabbath, which was and is a type of it, could not exhaust it. And Canaan, with its sweet plains and cessation of the wilderness wanderings, could not completely fulfill it ; because centuries after it had been given through Joshua, in the Psalms God spoke of yet another day, as though His rest were still future.

The rest may be a present experience.—The word “remaineth” has diverted the thoughts of commentators who have supposed it referred to heaven. There is rest, sweet rest, there. But “remaineth” means “unexhausted, unrealized, by aught which has taken place.” The rest is for us here and now. “We which have believed *do* enter into rest.” Where is it ? In the bosom of Christ : “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” It is in ploughing the furrow of daily duty—“Take My yoke ; . . . I find rest.”

This rest is compatible with great activity.—He that enters into the Divine rest is not reduced to quietism. On the seventh day the Creator rested from creation ; but He works in providence. Jesus, on the seventh day, rested from Calvary ; but He pleads in heaven. Cease from your own works, after a similar fashion ; abandon your restless planning and striving ; by the grace of the Holy Spirit better service will be produced.

IT is difficult to exaggerate the value of the physical senses. Take, for instance, that of scent. It is the means of exquisite enjoyment, conveying to us the perfume of garden or field ; and it secures us against serious perils that lie in wait for our unwary footsteps. By the order of God's providence, hurtful substances exhale noxious and forbidding odors, by reason of which we are warned from going into their close proximity.

The soul also is endowed with senses. How important a part our spiritual senses may play in the regimen of the inner life ! If we are quick to discern good and evil, we may welcome the one and avoid the other with ever-increasing readiness. We may receive the blessing of the one when still afar off, and avoid the curse of the other when only threatening us.

The army which is ill served by its scouts stands a much worse chance than if it were forewarned when an attack was advancing. The foremost ranks of the foe may be over the ramparts, and engaged in the heart of the fortress, before there has been time for preparation. Oh, to detect temptation, when still it is only a thought, a suggestion, a faint shadow on the sky !

We may sharpen our senses by use. When I was in the tea-trade, my sense of touch and taste and smell became acute to discern quite minute differences. We need a similar acuteness in discerning good and evil. May our hearts become most sensitive to all that might lead to temptation, so that we may deal with the tempter in the very earliest suggestions of evil. Lord, make us quick of scent in the fear of the Lord (Isa. xi. 3 R. v.).

It is impossible to renew again to repentance, the while. . . .

Heb. vi. 6 (R. V., marg.).

THE writer of this Epistle is eager to lead his readers from first principles to that strong meat which was befitting for those of mature growth ; and, as he proceeds to do so, it was as though he were arrested by a sudden thought of some who had recently fallen away from the faith.

In the awful stress of trial which accompanied the fall of Jerusalem, the Hebrew Christians, who were still dwelling in Palestine, were strongly tempted to apostatize. Some, indeed, had done so. But can we really consider that they ever were true Christians? They went *out*, because they had never been truly *of*. They had been enlightened as to the doctrines of Christianity ; but the enlightenment had been of their head rather than of their heart. They had tasted of the heavenly hopes, anticipations, and joys of the Gospel message, without really belonging to the Household of Faith. But, notwithstanding all, they had gone back.

It is impossible to renew such to repentance, *whilst they go on* living as they do, crucifying the Son of God by their vicious and cowardly course of action, and putting Him to an open shame. Notice that *whilst*, suggested by Bishop Westcott, of the margin of the R. V. It is the solution of the great difficulty which has perplexed many timid souls. The impossibility of renewal is only for those who persist in their evil ways. Abandon your sins, and God will restore you to your old place.

It cannot be too clearly emphasized that this text does not say that backsliders cannot be restored to the favor and forgiveness of God ; but that they cannot be restored so long as they cling to the things which had been the sources of their declension.

After the power of an indissoluble life.

Heb. vii. 16 (R. V., marg.).

THIS chapter is a veritable Psalm of Life. It overflows with the message of the Easter morning. Throughout its verses it is witnessed that He liveth; that He ever liveth; that He liveth after the power of an indissoluble life.

Remember all that was done to dissolve and loose it. Satan spoke to his chief captains, Sepulchre and Corruption, and bade them hold his Prisoner fast. The Sanhedrim affixed their seal, set the watch, and made the grave as secure as possible. But it was all in vain. His body could not see corruption. His life defied death. All through the Greek mythology there is the wail of infinite sorrow. Laocoon and his sons strangled by the folds of the mighty serpent: day always mastered by night: the year with its wealth of life descending to the abyss. Strive as man might, he would be mastered at last, and primeval night reign once more. But all this is altered in Jesus. He is Priest after the power of an indissoluble life.

And, what is more, that life may be communicated to us by the Holy Spirit. It is not only true that He ever liveth; but also that because He lives, and as He lives, we shall live also. In the first creation God breathed into Adam the breath of his life, and he became a living soul; but in the second creation Christ breathes into us the spirit of His life, and our spirit is filled with a property which it had not previously, and in which the sons of men have no share. "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." See to it that you deny your own life, so that His life may become evermore regnant within you.

In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old.
Heb. viii. 13.

THERE had been a manifest decay and vanishing away of the first Tabernacle or Temple with its rites and services. At the time when these words were written there were evident symptoms of the approaching collapse of the whole system of which pious Jews had been wont to boast. But the Holy Spirit reassures their failing hearts.

It is well, He seems to say, that these should vanish from the earth; that men may be certified that the old covenant, of which they were the sign and seal, has also gone—gone never to be recalled. Thereupon, the very natural enquiry was suggested: If the old covenant has decayed and vanished away, what is the agreement or arrangement under which we are living now? To this enquiry the present chapter is an answer.

Those who believe in Christ are still in covenant relationship with God. A new covenant has been set up, which indeed is as old as the everlasting hills. It is the covenant of love; the covenant which says very little of what man does, and much of the I WILLs of Jehovah; a covenant which was entered into between God and His Son, standing as Mediator; a covenant which has been sealed with priceless blood.

The provisions of that covenant are enumerated in the foregoing verses: that God will engrave His law on mind and heart, and take us to be His people and be our God, and remember our sins no more. As the decay of the symbols of the Old Testament indicated that it was vanishing, so the ever-fresh beauty of the supper of our Lord, as it was practiced in the first Church, witnessed to the permanence of the New Testament.

Unto them that look for Him shall He appear.

Heb. ix. 28.

THERE is an evident parallel intended between the first and second Advent, and especially in the manner of looking for it. At the first Advent there were many who were definitely looking for and hastening to that day. Simeon was waiting for the consolation of Israel; and Anna spoke of the infant Lord to those who were expecting redemption in Israel. To look for the consolation and to look for the redemption were the two articles in that early creed. And presently this quiet, patient waiting broke out into the rapturous song of the *Nunc Dimittis*.

But all Jews were not looking for that blessed Hope, the appearance of the Grace of God. When our Lord came, the leading teacher of Judaism was Philo, and he not only had no Messianic hopes of his own, but discouraged them in other people. He conceded that there might be a return of Jewish national life; but he had no expectation of it being under the leadership of the Christ.

It has been truly remarked that this eager looking for the Advent has always been the mark of the living Church. "Ye turned," said the apostle, "unto God from idols . . . to wait for His Son from heaven." And again he said, "A crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give unto me in that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love His appearing."

As it was with the first Advent it shall be with the second. The Son of God will come at a time and in a manner for which men are not prepared; and only the elect, who may have been contemned and despised by the world at large, will discern Him, and go forth to meet Him in the air.

He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. Heb. x. 9.

THE meaning of this is clear. In the old covenant the stress was laid on the outward rite; but in the new covenant, for burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin are substituted first the entire devotion and consecration of the blessed Lord to His Father's will; and next, ours in Him.

It is very noticeable that by the offering of the cross, in which the Saviour's yielded will culminated, we are said to have been sanctified, consecrated, or set apart *once for all* (ver. 10). The thought there is, evidently, that our Saviour's death has implicated us forevermore; and that His Church, whom He represented in that supreme act, is forever pledged to be dead unto the world and sin.

But still later we learn that He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified (ver. 14). The change of tense surely indicates that what was accomplished *for* us in the purpose of God when Jesus died, must be accomplished *in* us by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Every time, therefore, our will is brought into more perfect union with that of God, a further step is taken toward that glorious elevation which Jesus made ours in the death of the cross.

And if you would have an incentive to this, remember how Jesus promised that all who would do the will of God should be reckoned members of the holy family (Matt. xii. 46-50). Are you a member of that family? You may be, and sit only on the outer circle, for the constituent members are always altering their position toward the central Christ; now advancing toward the inner heart, now receding. Oh, see to it that you are not only within the holy circle of the will of God, but that you are near the golden centre where Jesus is seated.

They without us should not be made perfect.

Heb. xi. 40.

THIS chapter proves that the saints of all ages are essentially one. There is a link which unites them ; a thrill which passes from hand to hand around the circle. One theme for many voices ; one attitude for many faces ; one inspiration for many hearts. The saints that lived before the Advent and those that have lived since are one in their faith in the living God, making the unseen visible, the distant near, and seeing the eternal through the transient and ephemeral.

And now heaven waits. Its joys are not complete ; its rapture not full. The blessed are blessed ; but there is yet a margin between what they are and what they will be—between what they enjoy, and what they may enjoy. The choir is not full, and the anthem cannot be fully rendered till our voices blend in it. There is a pause, a halt, an expectancy, an incompleteness, till *we* come. Your dear ones want you to be there. They have not gone far into the heart of God's bliss, but are lingering near the gate till you have joined them.

From Switzerland your friends write you to say it is perfectly beautiful, but "it will be better when you join us ; we are reserving the best excursions till you arrive ; we are incomplete without you ; make haste." It is thus that the blessed await us. The spirit of Heaven is well represented by the courtesy of the old prophet, who would not sit down to meat with Jesse and his sons, till David, the youngest, had come thither also. And when the whole family is gathered, there will be a perfecting indeed, from which no element shall be wanting.

Oh rapture of eternal joy ! We stretch out our hands in yearning desire, and doing so touch other hands reached toward ours !

Ye are come unto Mount Sion.

Heb. xii. 22.

THESE poor Hebrew Christians, outcast from their Temple, and soon to see their beloved city vanish from the earth, were sore at heart. What a contrast was presented by the bare room in which they celebrated the simple supper and the splendid Temple with its magnificent rites ! What a tiny rill their hymns were, compared with the mighty torrent of Temple psalmody ! What a handful of worshippers, compared with the multitudes that congregated from all the world ! Sometimes it seemed as though the contrast were unbearable.

Then said the Holy Ghost, lift up your eyes and see. Ye are not the lonely, isolated handful ye suppose. Every time you offer your prayer and sing your hymns ye are joining with the spirits of the perfected just, with numberless holy angels, and with vast multitudes in heaven and on earth who are ever adoring Christ. You climb the temple of Worship, of which the steps are prayers and the gates praise, and as you do so, on either hand go myriads of happy and holy spirits ; and those surely are specially near whom you "have loved long since and lost awhile."

What special blessing these thoughts will bring to the bedridden, who for many years have not entered the courts of God's house ; to the aged, and lonely, and exiled ! We never worship God alone. As soon as we begin to pray, we say, *Our* Father which art in heaven, forgive *our* sins ; give us *our* daily bread. We need not die to pass within thy gates, O Jerusalem, city of God ! Already we tread thy golden pavement, and hear the music of the waters of life, and press to our wounds the leaves of thy tree.

Make you perfect in every good work to do His will.
Heb. xiii. 21.

TO perfect is to adjust, to put in joint, to articulate us with the living Saviour. It may be described as a surgical operation. Too many of those who are in the Body of Christ are not in living articulate union with Him. Hence the writer asks that we may be properly jointed with Christ.

The Agent of this process.—The God of Peace. Let us not be afraid of Him, as though He must use some terrible anguish, some heartrending grief. He will not shrink from this, if all other methods fail; but He prefers to achieve His purpose by gentle, tender, peaceful means. He is the God of the summer evening; of the bursting spring; of the slumber of the little babe.

The Guarantee that He will perform this process.—He brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep; and surely the power which achieved that bringing again is capable of any demand that may be made on it. Will He do so much for the Shepherd, and neglect the flock? Will He give Him the victory, and forsake those for whom He won it? In bringing the Shepherd did He not pledge Himself by the most solemn sanctions to do all that needed doing for the weakest of His sheep?

The Object of this process.—He adjusts us, that all which is well pleasing in His sight may be readily fulfilled in and through our yielded natures. When the helmsman is right with the captain, the boat will naturally take the course that the captain selects. When the machinery is adjusted with the motive power, the pulse of the piston will be felt away at the furthest loom, with the smallest amount of leakage and the largest of result.

Unspotted from the world.

James i. 27.

“THE white flower of a blameless life !” The view of pure and undefiled religion presented in this definition was characteristic of James, surnamed the Just, who was revered even by the Jews for his austere piety, and whose vesture of simple white was emblematic of his stainless character. Whatever may be our views about the doctrines of Christianity, we must see to it that their outcome be in pure and holy living. Orthodoxy of view is utterly worthless unless it be combined with orthodoxy of life. This was the side of truth on which James insisted.

What a beautiful conception is here ! The unspotted life ! No book is like the Bible in its conceptions of sin ; indeed, we owe to it the thought of sin, and its evil in the sight of God. But there is no book with so lofty an ideal of what life may become when it is yielded to the grace of Christ. A cleansed heart, and an unspotted robe ; no sin allowed and permitted in the soul, and no evil habit allowed to dominate and enthrall the life.

But how is it to be ours ? (1) Put the grave of Christ between you and your former life, and so reckon that you are dead to all solicitations that would induce you to live according to the lusts and passions that dominate the rest of the Gentiles. (2) Seek by use to exercise your spiritual senses, that you may be quick to discern the first and most distant approach of temptation, that so it may find you hidden in the risen living Saviour. (3) Let the blood of Jesus be instantly applied, so that you may be immediately cleansed from the least spot that may have defiled your dress. (4) Keep away your eyes, and speech, and feet from all scenes and society that have a defiling influence.

Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?
James ii. 5.

THERE is nothing that men dread more than poverty. They will break every commandment in the Decalogue rather than be poor. But it is God's chosen lot. He had one opportunity only of living our life, and He chose to be born of parents too poor to present more than two doves at His presentation in the temple. All His life was spent among the poor. His chosen apostles and friends were, with few exceptions, poor. He lived on charity, rode in triumph on a borrowed steed, ate His last meal in a borrowed room, and lay in a borrowed grave. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?" Why is poverty so dear to God?

It is in harmony with the spirit of the Gospel.—The world-spirit aggrandizes itself with the abundance of its possessions. Its children vie with each other in luxury and display. The spirit of Christ, on the other hand, chooses obscurity, lowliness, humility; and with these poverty is close akin.

It compels to simpler faith in God.—The rich man may trust Him; but the poor man must. There is so much temptation to the well-to-do classes to interpose their wealth between themselves and the pressure of daily need; but the poor man has no fortress in which to hide, except the two strong arms of God. He waits on Him for his daily bread, and gathers the manna falling straight from the sky.

It gives more opportunities of service.—The rich are waited on, and pay for servants to wait on those they love. The poor, on the contrary, are called to minister to one another, at every meal, and in all the daily round of life. Herein they become like Him who was, and is, as one that serveth, and who became poor, that through His poverty we might be rich.

20 *James iii. 2.*
If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.

THINK of the sins of speech ! How innumerable they are ! When we see them in the light of this chapter, we can understand the holy Isaiah saying, "Woe is me, for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips ; for mine eyes have seen the King."

The sins of speech about ourselves.—The tongue boasteth great things. We are all apt to be vain, boastful, exaggerated. We tell stories that redound to our own credit ; contrive to focus attention on our own words and deeds ; and even in delivering God's messages manage to let it be seen that we have a clearer insight into truth or a closer familiarity with God than our fellows.

The sins of speech about others.—"We break the law of courtesy, and become harsh, insolent, and uncivil ; or the law of purity, and repeat stories that leave a stain ; or the law of truth, and practice insincerity, equivocation, and dissimulation ; or the law of kindness, and are harsh and implacable to those who are beneath us in station. Or in our desire to stand well with others we are guilty of flattery, servility, time-serving, and the like."

The sins of speech in connection with God's work.—We disparage other workers ; compliment them to their faces on addresses they have delivered, and disparage them behind their backs ; pass criticisms which take away the effect which their words had otherwise exercised over others ; contrive to indicate one defect in which was otherwise a perfect achievement. Alas for us ! How greatly we need to offer the prayer of the psalmist : Set a watch, O God, upon our lips !

The Spirit . . . yearneth for us even unto jealous envy.
James iv. 5 (R. V., marg.).

A VERY deep and remarkable verse ! The apostle is contending against the worldliness which was so rife among the believers he was addressing. They were set on pleasure ; they sought the friendship of the world, and became unfaithful to their divine Lover ; they were proud and high-minded. He went so far as to speak of them as adulterers and adulteresses ; and then adopting a gentler, pleading tone, he says, " You are grieving the gentle Holy Spirit who has come to dwell within you, who yearns with a jealous envy to possess your entire nature for Himself."

The Spirit of God dwells within thee, O believer in Jesus Christ. If a man have not the Spirit of God, he is none of His ; and since thou art undoubtedly one of us, thou hast most certainly the Holy Spirit. But the mistake of thy life consists in this, that He hath not *thee*. Some part of thy heart is given, but not all ; and this causes Him the most exquisite pain, like that which we suffer from jealousy.

No keener pain is possible to the heart of man than to have good reason for the belief that a loved one is not wholly true ; that there has been an alienation of affection which was once whole and entire ; that another is receiving a part at least of the heart's devotion. The fire and screw are light in comparison with our anguish then ; but, this is what the Spirit of God suffers when we share between Him and the world that love which should be all His own. " I, the Lord thy God am a jealous God," is as true as when first spoken from Sinai. The person of Jesus Christ must be the Sun of our system, though that system may include many planets beside.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

James v. 16.

IT might be rendered literally: "Very strong is the supplication of a righteous man, energizing." When a man is right with God, not regarding iniquity in his heart, nor seeking aught for his own pleasure, the energy of the Divine Spirit moves mightily within him, and his prayers become very strong. They recall the Master's, with their strong cryings and tears.

The righteous man finds relief for suffering in prayer.—"Is any among you suffering? let him pray." There are sorrows we cannot tell to our dearest. Surges of grief sweep over us for which we have no words. Life is a stern fight for us all; and each heart knows its own bitterness. But there is always one resort: we can pour out our sorrows into the ear of our compassionate and merciful High Priest.

The righteous man prays the prayer of faith.—The prayer of faith is that which is so sure of the Divine answer that it knows that it has received it, though there is no appearance of its having been granted to the sense. We can only pray that prayer when we have asked what is in God's will to bestow. But righteous men cannot always pray thus, because they do not know the Lord's will on matters not recorded in this book. There are some sicknesses which are unto death, and we cannot pray the prayer of faith for these. *If you cannot pray the prayer of faith, take medicine, and use the best means in your reach.*

The righteous man can affect the whole history of his fatherland by his prayers.—It was so with Elijah, as we learn here. It was so with John Knox, whose prayers were more dreaded by Mary of Scots than the armies of Philip.

An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. 1 Pet. i. 4.

YES, it is an inheritance. It is a free gift, and yet we have a right to it. We do not ask for it—we were born into its blessed privilege. The child that lies in yonder cradle, over which the coronet is emblazoned, may claim his broad ancestral estates simply by right of birth: and it is on that tenure that the saints hold heaven. By God's great mercy we have been begotten again.

Oh, blessed heritage! *Incorruptible!* The gnawing tooth of decay cannot injure it. Moth and rust cannot consume, nor thieves break through to steal. No spendthrift hand can scatter or overspend its treasures. *Undefiled!* Not a stain on its pure robes; not a freckle on its leaves; not a taint of miasma on its atmosphere. Into the city entereth nothing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. *That fadeth not away!* To use the Greek word, it is *amaranthine*. Some of the fairest hopes that ever blessed human vision; the most delightful friendships; the most perfect dreams of delight, have faded and withered before our eyes. That never can.

It is kept for us, and we are kept for it. It is reserved in heaven for you.

“ I have a heritage of joy,
That yet I must not see;
The hand that bled to make it mine,
Is keeping it for me.”

Who by the power of God are guarded through faith.—The idea is that we are being brought through an enemy's country under a strong escort—as the women and children from Lucknow, between the double line of English soldiers, till they were safe from the onset of the Sepoys. We are not in heaven yet; but we are as safe as if we were.

Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

1 Pet. ii. 24.

HE came into the sinner's world.—Himself sinless, He took our nature. Accustomed to the pure atmosphere of His own bright home, He allowed His ears and eyes to be assailed by sounds and sights beneath which they must have smarted. His blessed feet trod among the dust of death, the mounds of graves, and the traps that men laid to catch Him. And all for love of us.

He lived the sinner's life.—Not a sinner's life, but the ordinary life of men. He wrought in the carpenter's shed ; attended wedding festivals, and heartrending funerals ; ate, and drank, and slept. He sailed in the boat with His fisher-friends ; sat wearied at the well-head ; and was hungry with the sharp morning air.

He sympathized with the sinners' griefs.—In their affliction He was afflicted. He often groaned, and sighed, and wept. When leprosy with its sores, bereavement with its heartrending loneliness, dumbness and deafness, and devil-possession, came beneath His notice, they elicited the profoundest response from His sympathetic heart.

He died the sinner's death.—He was wounded for our transgressions. He was treated as the scapegoat, the leper, the sin-offering of the human family. The iniquities of us all met in Him, as the dark waters of the streets pour into one whirling pool. He stood as our substitute, sacrifice, and satisfaction : the guilt, and curse, and penalty of a broken law borne and exhausted in His suffering nature.

He is preparing the sinner's home.—"I go to prepare a place for you" ; and no mother was ever more intent on preparing his bedroom for her sailor-boy on his return, than Jesus on preparing heaven.

Fear not their fear, neither be troubled.

1 Pet. iii. 14 (R. V.).

IT was a time of very real and fiery trial when Peter wrote these words. Persecution was already beginning with the House of God. The first mutterings of the awful storm which was to break in Nero's terrible atrocities were making themselves heard throughout the Roman world. The intention of this Epistle, therefore, was to encourage these scattered saints, that they might not be overwhelmed. Some who read these words may need similar comfort.

Remember, beloved fellow-believers, that Jesus has suffered; your Lord and Master has trodden these thorns before you. See, they are flecked with His blood. Would you not desire to be fellow-partaker with Him in His sorrow, that you may share His glory? It is only in suffering that we can properly identify ourselves with the great anguish of the world, or learn to comfort or pray for others. And, probably, none know the innermost tenderness and companionship of Jesus like those who daily fill up that which is behind of His sufferings. Besides, their fear is much worse in anticipation than in actual experience. Probably God entirely delivers His martyrs from those physical tortures which to on-lookers might seem unbearable.

This has been the perpetual testimony of the Armenian refugees. Miss Codrington's story of her experiences in China, and Dr. Baedeker's statement of what he has learned in his wide experience amid the refugees and imprisoned saints in all parts of Europe, support and confirm the same conclusion. Sanctify Jesus Christ in your heart as Lord and King. Maintain a good conscience; do not be turned aside for fear of man; and when you come to suffer, you will find the fire has lost its sting.

Arm yourselves with the same mind.

1 Pet. iv. 1.

THE Church was redeemed in a baptism of pain: for her members to suffer, and by suffering to overcome the world, is to fulfill the forecast which Jesus gave when He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Arm yourselves with this mind; put on this thought, this resolution, this purpose; determine that suffering at least shall never daunt you.

The reason for donning this armor.—Here we have no continuing city. In the death of Jesus we suffered in the flesh, and ceased from our connection with the world which cast Him out: and, as suffering is meted out to us, we become increasingly convinced that we can have no fellowship with its sins. The pain which the world allots to the followers of Jesus widens the chasm between them and it, pulls down the old nests in which their affections once built, and makes them more determined than ever to follow their Lord.

The choice which this armor involves.—No more the lusts of men, but the will of God. Never again to work the desire of the Gentiles, but to live according to God. Not henceforth to bow before the bondage of evil habit, but with erect and upright gaze to behold the face of Christ—such is the choice. Will you not now make it at this solemn moment, as you stand on this watershed between the two continents—here of the morning, there of the midnight? Follow the King, cost what it may.

The nature of the armor.—It is armor of Light: in which Christ's nature was encased, and on which all the shafts of man and devil broke into splinters. No weapon that was ever manufactured can prevail against its heavenly temper.

After that ye have suffered a little while.

1 Pet. v. 10 (R. V.).

SUCH a little while ! In the Epistle to the Hebrews (x. 37, R. V.) it is called a *very* little while. The late Dr. Gordon loved to read it, *Yet a little while, how little, how little !* which is the literal rendering of the Greek. A little while ! compared with the eternal years ; with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; with the compensations which await us in the Home of God. Though our life were one long agony, it would seem but as yesterday when it is passed ; a dream, or a sleepless watch in the night, when the morning breaks.

There is a limitation to our suffering. It is only for a little while ; but every moment has been fixed by the immutable purpose and love of God. The hour of darkness is timed with an exact measurement. You shall not suffer one moment more than is absolutely necessary for your perfecting of God's glory ; and for every moment there is an ample supply of grace.

But remember also that in Christ God has called you to His Eternal Glory. You heard that call years ago, and have been following it through days of evil and nights of pain. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, and He is waiting to fulfill His eternal purpose. What a banquet that will be when God will satisfy the expectations of those whom He has called to partake of it !

And the suffering is being used in ways you little understand to perfect, stablish, and strengthen you. It is from sick chambers and torture-rooms that God brings forth His veteran hosts in the day of battle. Think not so much of affliction as of the love of Christ, and the blessedness of being like Him and with Him forever.

An entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly.

2 Pet. i. 11.

THERE are two ways of entering a port. A ship may come in, waterlogged and crazy, just kept afloat by continual working at the pumps; or it may enter with every sail set, her pennon floating at the masthead. The latter is what the apostle desires for himself and those whom he addresses. He desired that an entrance abundant should be ministered unto them.

An abundant entrance is really a *choral* entrance. The idea may be illustrated from the entrance of a Roman conqueror to his city, whence he had been sent out to war. Amid the crowds of spectators, the procession climbed slowly to the capital, while sweet incense was poured on the air, and music raised her sweetest and most inspiring strains. Will your entrance into heaven be like that? Will you enter it, saved so as by fire, or to receive a reward? Will you come unrecognized and unknown, or be welcomed by scores and hundreds to whom you have been the means of blessing, and who will await you? Will your coming make music right through the home of God? This is the meaning of the choral entrance. It reminds us of those words of Christ about the friends whom we have made by the right use of money welcoming us into eternal habitations.

The conditions on which that choral welcome will be afforded are clearly enunciated here. Look back to verses 5, 6 (R. v.). There the identical word of the *choir* occurs again, translated "supply." It is as though these eight Christian graces composed the octave choir, and that our diligence in acquiring and cultivating these will be rewarded hereafter by the choral welcome into the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Wherefore give diligence.

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly.

2 Pet. ii. 9.

THE following authentic story will best illustrate and enforce this text. I give it as it was given to me by a friend who had verified the circumstances during a visit to Blankenburg. A godly Lutheran pastor, Sander, of Elberfeld, had been compelled to rebuke an evil-liver for some gross sin, and had thereby attracted to himself his malicious hate ; and the man vowed to repay him. One night the pastor was called to visit a house that could only be reached by passing over a plank which bridged an impetuous torrent. Nothing seemed easier to his enemy than to conceal himself on the bank till the man of God was returning from the opposite end of the plank, to meet him in the middle, throw him into the deep and turbid stream, leaving it to be surmised that in the darkness he had simply lost his foothold. When, however, from his hiding-place he caught sight of the pastor's figure in the dim light, he was surprised to see that he was not alone, but accompanied by another. There were two figures advancing toward him across the narrow plank, and he did not dare attempt his murderous deed. And as they passed his hiding-place, the one whom he did not know cast such a glance toward him as convinced him of the sinfulness of the act he had contemplated, and began a work in his heart which led to his conversion.

When converted, he sought out the pastor, to confess to him the murderous intention which had so nearly mastered him, and said : " It would have been your death had you not been accompanied." " What do you mean ? " said the other ; " I was absolutely alone." " Nay," said he, " there were two." Then the pastor knew that God had sent His angel, as He sent him to bring Lot out of Sodom.

One day is with the Lord as a thousand years.

2 Pet. iii. 8.

THERE is no succession of time with God : no past, no future ; He dwells in the eternal present, as I AM. As we may look down from a lofty mountain on a stream in the valley beneath, tracing it from its source to its fall into the ocean, and feeling that each part of it is equally distant from the spot where we stand, so must time appear to the Eternal ; who was, and is, and is to come.

One day is as a thousand years.—He could do in a single day, if He chose, what He has at other times taken a thousand years to accomplish. Do not say that He will require so long to do this or that—to restore or convert the Jews ; to introduce the millennial age ; to undo the effects of the Curse, and fill the years with blessing. Do not say that He must have as long to make the second heavens and earth as the first. Do not say that the overthrow of the empire of darkness, and the conversion of multitudes to God, can only be achieved by the processes which are now in vogue. All this could be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ; and between sunrise and sunset God could effect the work of a thousand ordinary years.

A thousand years as one day.—Periods that seem so long to our finite minds are not so to God. A thousand years in our reckoning is but a day in His. You say it is nearly two thousand years ago since Jesus died, or at least that we are in the evening of the second thousand. But in God's reckoning, the Cross, the Grave, the Resurrection, took place in the morning of yesterday. Take wider views of God's horizon ; believe in His mighty march throughout the centuries ; He takes up the isles as a very little thing, and the centuries are the beats of the minute-hand.

If we say, . . . but if we walk.

1 John i. 6, 7.

IN three marked passages, the beloved apostle guards against what men are apt to say, and indicates to them what it would be better for them to substitute in thought and speech.

Men are apt to say that they have fellowship with Christ and yet continue to walk in darkness.

—It arises sometimes from their desire to stand well with their fellows, or because they do not realize how much darkness is still in their lives. But whichever be the cause, they lie and do not the truth. It is better far to walk quietly in the light, so far as we have it; and thus we shall secure His blessed fellowship, and His blood will be continually cleansing us from sin, removing all hindrance on Christ's side to the free communication of His choicest gifts.

Again, men are apt to say that they have no sin (ver. 8).—It is a profound mistake on their part, arising from defective ideas of what sin is, or from self-ignorance. If they realized what God's standard of holiness and sinlessness is; if they understood that sin consists in coming short of His glory as much as in distinct violation of His will; if they knew that there may be sin in motive as much as in act, and even in want of love—they would not speak thus. As it is, they deceive themselves, though no one else. It is better to confess our sins and seek cleansing, even for those of ignorance, in the precious blood of Jesus.

Again, men are apt to say that they have not sinned.—Though they have fallen below their own standard, they do not like to admit it, and cling tenaciously to their position of having got beyond the range of sinning. Much better to admit it, and obtain forgiveness through the one Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

265 *passeth*
The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.

1 John ii. 17.

THE world stands for the entire system of human interests by which we are surrounded. It does not refer to what God made by His creative fiat and moulding hands, but to the shows, fashions, and pursuits of men. It is used here in the sense in which the devil took Jesus into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said, "It hath been delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it."

The word used of its evanescence is a remarkably interesting one. It is that employed of the rapid change in some scenic display or performance. A moment ago the stage was full of life and color; but it is suddenly deserted, and the actors and actresses have put off their splendid dresses, and are habited in mean and common attire. Or we might compare the passing away of the world to the dying color of the sunset. The tempter offers us some bait, some outward object which appeals to the eye of the body or the mind, and we reach out toward it; but as we grasp it it is gone. We have caught at a soap-bubble, have journeyed after a mirage, have hunted the will-o'-the-wisp. So unsubstantial and fleeting are the things with which the men of this world try to appease their immortal appetite.

But it is to be noticed that the desire for these things is even more evanescent than the things themselves. The apostle says that the *lust* thereof passeth away. The power of enjoyment dies away. The eye is sated with spectacles; the mind with constant change.

How great the contrast!—"He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Beloved, now are we children of God.

1 *John* iii. 2 (R. V.).

IT is our privilege, not only to be children, but to know that we are such. "Such we are" (ver. 1, R. V.). The world knows us not; but God knows us, and we know Him, and we know that we are His sons and daughters, through regeneration and faith. How do we know?

We believe His Word (John i. 12).—By faith we have received Him, we do trust in His name; then, by the authority of that text, if there were no other, we may claim to have been born into the Divine household.

We have the witness of the Spirit (Gal. iv. 6).—The fact that our hearts look to God as Father, and appeal to Him with the infant's cry, Abba, is a proof that we are born again. Do not look for an audible voice in your heart, but notice whether the thought of the fatherly love of God toward you is not becoming more familiar and precious. It is not the perception of your childship, but of His fatherhood, which will reassure you.

We are led by the Spirit.—If we are led by the Spirit, we shall love the things we once hated, and hate those we once loved. Our choices, tastes, methods of life, habits, and companionships, will undergo a radical alteration.

We love the people of God (1 John iv. 7, R. V.).—The converse is also true, that he who is begotten of God loveth.

We do not presumptuously and habitually yield to known sin (1 John iii. 9, R. V.).—The apostle is not speaking of some isolated act into which a man may fall under unexpected temptation, but of habitual courses of inconsistency and wrongdoing. Test yourselves, therefore, whether ye are indeed born again.

*We have known and believed the love that God
hath to us.*

1 John iv. 16.

LIFE is one long education in various phases and aspects of love. First as a child, then as a friend, then as a lover, as wife or husband, as father or mother. We are perpetually being allowed to sit in some higher form for the progress of this Divine study. For to love is to live. To be loved is to drink of the sweetest cordial that can be prepared from the vintages of earth. And all is intended to help us to understand better the nature of God, who is love. As each new experience enters our life, we should consider a fresh facet or angle to break up and reveal to us the glory of God's love. We should say to ourselves, Now I understand and know more accurately than before how God feels, and what His love is.

The apostle says we have known the love of God.—Indeed, it is so. Through years of life, each of which has been filled with the most various experiences, but filled also to the brim with proofs of God's tender loving-kindness, we have had innumerable proofs of His love, for

“E'en the cloud that spreads above, and veileth Love,
Itself is Love.”

The apostle says we must believe God's love.—Standing on the sure foundation of what we have proved God to be in the past, we may look on the present and future with perfect faith. We have known Him too well to doubt Him now. We have known, and now we believe. He has made no mistakes. He is making none. He has done the best, and is doing it. We do not understand His dealings, but we know Him who is behind the mystery of Providence, and can hear Him saying: “It is all right, only trust Me. Fear not! it is I.”

THIS Epistle is full of certainty. It rings with the words *we know*. And in these words we are taught that we may be certain in the region of prayer. Probably there is no region of the Christian life concerning which there is more uncertainty than this of prayer. Perhaps this is also the reason why there is so little prayer. Men doubt the use of spending time in shooting arrows, a very small percentage of which seem to strike the target.

The first condition in true prayer is to be sure that it is according to the will of God.—It is not difficult to do this when we base prayer on a promise. And this is what we should do to secure definiteness and assurance. There is nothing that pleases our Father more in His praying children than that they should bring His promises to Him for fulfillment, saying, “Do as Thou hast said.” But in cases where there is no promise to guide us we shall discover His will as we pray.

The next condition is to believe that God is listening.—We need not pray long to know this. Only be quiet and silent before Him, and a blessed sense, induced by the Holy Spirit, will pervade your heart and mind, that you are literally speaking into the ear and heart of your Heavenly Father, who is listening as intently as if He had nothing else to attend to in all the universe.

The third condition is to be sure that the thing we asked is granted.—It may not have come to hand, and it may not come in the precise form in which we sought it; but it is ours. We must dare to believe that we have that petition, labelled with our name, consigned to us, perhaps started on its way to us, although it may take years to come.

This is love, that we should walk after His commandments.

2 John 6 (R. V.).

HERE is a solution to many difficulties, and given so easily and naturally by this beloved elder to the elect lady and her children. He had been laying much emphasis on truth, and combining truth and love in an exquisite unity. Probably we can never love perfectly, till we are perfectly true. If you examine yourself in the feelings of distance and dislike, which you have toward some individual, it is almost certain that you will come on some want of transparency and sincerity in your dealings with them. It is also the case that if we put away all insincerity, and want of consecration, as between us and God, we shall come to love God more perfectly.

What deep, sweet rhythm of meaning there is in the first three verses of this letter! One reads them over and over again. Oh that that grace, mercy, and peace, may be with us, from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

The difficulty that you feel is that you do not love enough. You would like to love with a strong, undying flame, burning steadily toward Jesus Christ, cleansing you with its heat, constraining you with its love. But perhaps you fail to distinguish between love and the *emotion* of love. They are not the same. We may love without being directly conscious of love, or being able to estimate its strength and passion. Here is the solution to many of our questionings: They love who obey.

It is recorded of Dr. Chalmers that when a Scotch girl applied to be admitted to the sacrament, her testimony was so halting that it seemed as though she must stand back; but as she was leaving his room she turned back and said, "I canna speak for the Lord Jesus, but I could dee for Him."

For the sake of the Name they went forth.

3 John 7 (R. V.).

THE beloved elder is anxious about some travelling evangelists, who had gone forth to visit the churches; and is commending them to the care of Gaius. He was to set them forward in a manner that should be worthy of God. This is a high standard for our entertainment of brethren and strangers withal. It would save us from niggardliness and stint, for God is never miserly or meagre. It would equally save us from ostentation, since in God there is perfect simplicity. It would pervade our behavior with the most perfect grace. But notice, in respect of these evangelists:—

Their motive.—"For the sake of the Name." It is not needful to say *whose* Name. There is one Name above every name; in which whatever we do is to be done. To teach the meaning hidden in that Name; to unfold its sweetness and power; to exert its spell over souls that had never felt its magnetism; to glorify it and make it honored and beloved—this was their one thought and aim. Oh that we were animated by the same gracious motive!

Their delicacy.—They would take nothing of the Gentiles. It seemed to them incongruous to go for alms and maintenance to those who do not love their Lord. Besides, could not He maintain His own servants? They certainly would not have sanctioned the means that modern Christians adopt of getting money from the ungodly.

Their welcome.—We ought to welcome all such; and in doing so we may be fellow-helpers with them and with the truth. It is a very beautiful act to link ourselves with God's honored servants by prayer and sympathy, that we may be counted their fellow-helpers and companions.

29 *Keep yourselves in the love of God.*

Jude 21.

THERE is a strong current running. If you keep in its main stream, it will bear you gently but irresistibly forward ; but there are so many side-currents, that we must be very careful not to be swept out of it. You are in it by grace, now keep in it.

Build yourselves on your most holy faith.—Build, not on your emotions ; not on your conceptions of what may be right or wrong ; not on your experience—but on the strong and massive outlines of the faith once delivered to the saints (ver. 3). We may well contend for it, if it is to yield the foundation of our spiritual upbuilding. In other words, you must come back, again and yet again, to the teachings of the Word of God, and specially of the life of Jesus.

Pray in the Holy Spirit.—Wait at the Divine footstool until your prayers are indicted by Him, and the spring arises from the depths of God. And whensoever you feel the inward movement of God's Spirit, yield to it. He will correct and prune from your prayers all that should not be in them. He will lead you out in intercession for others, and for the glory of Christ, of which you did not know yourself capable. To pray in the Holy Spirit is to let the Holy Spirit pray in you.

Look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Always be on the outlook. Let your soul stand on tiptoe in anticipation of His coming. Let yours be the words of the Canticles, "I sleep, but my heart waketh ; it is the voice of my Beloved, that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister ; my love, my undefiled." The heart that waits for Jesus, will not have to wait in vain. And even in the act of waiting, it will be kept in the love of God, which is also eternal life.

I am the First and the Last.

Rev. i. 11.

IT is true, O Son of God. Thou art! The First in order of *Being*, and last in the full completeness of Thy glory.

First in respect of Time, for Thou art the everlasting Father—Father and Creator of the ages; and when time shall be no more Thou wilt last forever. From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God. Thy years shall not fail.

First in respect of Creation.—Thou wast before all things; Thine was an age prior to the creation of matter; all things were made by Thee: and when the heavens and earth that are now have passed away forever; when the elements shall have melted with fervent heat; when the sun shall be burned out and the stars wane—Thou wilt still be the last, able to bring into being new heavens and a new earth.

First in the order of Redemption.—God *first* loved us. From before the foundation of the world, Thou wert the Lamb slain; before the foundation of the world we were chosen in Thee. First in the love that resolved to redeem; first in the mystery of Thine incarnation, lowest in the depth of Thy descent unto death, and in the resurrection through which Thou becamest the First-born among the dead; first to open the way within the vail, to bear our nature risen before the throne, and to inaugurate for man the life of resurrection-power.

First in respect to the experience of Thine elect.—None is to be compared with Thee, Thou Prince of the kings of the earth. Their Alpha, their Beginning, the Day-star of their Hope, the Dawn of their Life, the Origin of all that is good and blessed in their Life; whom they take to be their Ideal, their Goal, their Aim, their Omega, their End.

June September
I will give him a white stone.

Rev. ii. 17.

THERE is every reason to suppose that this white stone is a diamond, and that it stands for the Urim and Thummim stone, which the high priest wore in his breast-plate, and which he consulted for the oracles of God. It probably darkened with the Divine No, and grew lustrous with Yes.

The believer may have direct knowledge of the will of God.—You may have your white stone. If only your heart is right with God, you may know His will for your path, not only by the pillared cloud of outward circumstances, but by the inner bearing of the heart. By a quick intuition you may know what God's mind is, both when you kneel in prayer and when you are called on to act. Only the surface of the inner life must be unruffled and pure; there must be no anxious agitation, no blurring miasma of sin.

Each revelation of God's will carries with it a deeper knowledge of Himself.—On the Urim stone were engraven the mystic characters of the Divine name. On these no eye but Aaron's might rest; so, deep in our heart, these revelations of God's nature are given, which are direct and special for each loving and obedient soul. Eye hath not seen nor heart conceived what God says to His children about life and death, and Himself, and their relationship, and the glorious future.

Such revelations are in proportion to our overcoming life.—If you are perpetually yielding to sin and impurity, and being trodden down by the heel of passion, such communications from the Infinite will be rare and indistinct. To him *that overcometh*, not once for all, but perpetually, shall be made the revelations of God.

I will make . . . a pillar in the Temple of my God.

Rev. iii. 12.

ALL who lived on the seaboard of Asia Minor were familiar with the vast and beautiful temples, in which Oriental lavishness and Greek art combined to realize the utmost magnificence. Their ruins strew the deserted sites of former cities to this day. The Lord therefore used familiar imagery in this promise. A column hewn from its rocky bed, richly sculptured, and conveyed to the rising temple-structure !

Stability.—"Shall go no more out." God Himself shall establish, strengthen, and settle, the soul which trusts Him, and is willing to follow at all costs where He leads. He will make such a one to be as Jachin or Boaz, the two mighty pillars which Solomon erected in the Temple court, their names signifying establishment and strength. There is no spectacle more inspiring than to behold the steadfastness of the soul that wavers and swerves not, but stands to its post, though all nature rocks.

Responsibility.—The pillar bears up some part of the structure ; and it is Christ's good pleasure to call us to share with Him the weight of ministering to His Church. As you show yourself true and faithful, God will allow you to bear up the common life of His people by ministering comfort, direction, encouragement, to such as could not stand by themselves.

Beauty.—The mediæval architects and masons took great pleasure in their designs. In many cases each pillar is sculptured as to its capital in its own fashion. There is infinite variety and beauty in the patterns. So Jesus is cutting deep into us the name of His Father and Himself, and making us bear new revelations to the world. Do not shrink from the deep cutting of His chisel.

A door opened in heaven.

Rev. iv. 1.

YOU must remember that John was in the isle of Patmos, a lone, rocky, inhospitable prison, for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. And yet to him, under such circumstances, separated from all the loved ones of Ephesus; debarred from the worship of the Church; condemned to the companionship of uncongenial fellow-captives—were vouchsafed these visions. For him, also, a door was opened.

We are reminded of Jacob, exiled from his father's house, who laid himself down in a desert place to sleep, and in whose dreams beheld a ladder which united earth with heaven, and at the top God stood.

Not to these only, but to many more, doors have been opened into heaven; when, so far as this world was concerned, it seemed as though their circumstances were altogether unlikely for such revelations. To prisoners and captives; to constant sufferers, bound by iron chains of pain to sick couches; to lonely pilgrims and wanderers; to women detained from the Lord's house by the demands of home; to domestic servants, missing the blessed opportunities of the sanctuary—how often has the door been opened in heaven. And what has not Nature been to some of us! How often in a country glade, the first flower of spring, a bird's warble, a gleam of light checkering the path, has been as a door opened in heaven!

There are conditions. You must know what it is to be in the Spirit; you must be pure in heart, and obedient in life; you must be willing to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Then, when God is all in all to us, when we live, move, and have our being in His favor, to us also will the door be opened.

In the midst of the throne stood a Lamb as it had been slain.

Rev. v. 6.

IT is a marvellous combination, but how reassuring ! Not the throne without the Lamb, else sinners dare not venture nigh : not the Lamb without the throne, or we might question His victory, His omnipotence to succor and save. No ; but the throne with the Lamb, the Lamb and the throne, the Lamb in its very midst.

How does the Lamb come there ? Surely meekness, humility, gentle submissiveness to an irresistible lot, are not the virtues that win thrones ! Perhaps not in man's world, but they do in God's. In the eternal world the passive virtues are stronger than the active ; sufferers wield more might than wrestlers ; to yield is to overcome ; to be vanquished is to conquer. It is because He was God's Lamb that He is now God's Anointed King, having seven horns for His omnipotence, seven eyes for omniscience, and seven spirits sent into all the world for omnipresence.

But see : the marks of suffering, of agony and death, of sacrifice, are stamped upon His flesh. " A Lamb as it had been slain." The redeemed ones that stand around tell the story ; He purchased and cleansed them by His blood ; He is worthy to fill the throne and rule forever. He who could make Himself the supreme sacrifice and offering for the sins of the world is worthy to be the world's King. The angels corroborate their verdict. In concentric rings they stand around the throne in their massed myriads. From ten thousand times ten thousand clear voices the acclamation rings out, Thou art worthy !

Take the scroll of history, of empire, of our lives, O gentle, holy, victorious, mighty Lamb. Break the seals, and unroll it page by page. All must be well that passes beneath Thy tender and mighty hand.

Come !

Rev. vi. 1.

THE A. v. reads, Come and see. The R. v., with the majority of Greek MSS., drops the last two words, and puts the simple word *come* into the lips of the four living creatures. Indeed, that word rings through the corridors of this book like a clarion. Come, Son of God ! Come, according to Thy plighted word ! Come, for creation travails in pain together until now ! Come restore Thine ancient people, and bring in the golden age ! Come ! Take to Thyself Thy great power, and reign ! The time is rife ! Midnight has faded into dawn, and dawn is lightening fast to day !

The ages which are characterized by the bloodless victories of civilization and peace are incomplete without Thee ; and as *the white horse* issues forth, men are not satisfied with the abundance of this world's goods, there is still an unsatisfied yearning which says, *Come*.

The ages most saturated with blood—the blood of men, shed by the hands of men, where harvests grow rank because the soil has been so richly fertilized by blood and tears—need Thee sorely ; and as the *red horse* comes forth, sad Mother Earth, who has received so many mangled bodies to her bosom, bids Thee come.

The ages, filled with plague, pestilence, and famine, wherein beasts multiply about the homes of men, because there is no hand to keep them back, since men have perished from the earth, as the *livid horses* go forth, cry, Come.

And listen to the cry of Thy martyrs, from beneath the altar. Is it not time to arrest the heavy hand of the persecutor, and avenge their blood ? Then come, and add to all Thy other crowns, the crown of all the earth !

The Lamb shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life.

Rev. vii. 17 (R. V.).

WE do not live until we have been born again. The moment of regeneration is the first moment of life. All the years before are as though they had never been. But from the moment we receive the life of the eternal God into our being, we begin an endless progression.

The entrance of that life makes us lambs in the flock of the Good Shepherd.—We no longer resist, or fight, or boast in things of which we should be ashamed. We become pure, sweet, gentle, lowly, and submissive. We are willing to lay down our lives for others. We follow the way of the cross without murmur or complaint. Every time we eat of that bread and drink of the cup we witness to the world our desire to absorb more and more of the lamb-like nature of the Son of God. Hence, it is said, the Lamb shall lead, shall shepherd, shall tend us as His flock.

The life which God has implanted yearns for satisfaction.—As a parched flock desires the crystal streams that purl over the pebbles, so the flock of God in this life and the next cry out for God, for the living God. Nothing will satisfy God's lambs and sheep but God Himself. And this is satisfied in Jesus. In Him the eternal God comes near to us; we follow Him without fear.

And in that life there is eternal progression.—Jesus leads us from one fountain to another, from one well to the next; always deeper into the heart of heaven, always further toward the very centre of all things, which is God. We shall always be satisfied; but our capacity will constantly enlarge, and it will become necessary to give us fuller manifestations, according to His own promise (John xvii. 26, R. V.).

That he should add it unto the prayers of all saints.

Rev. viii. 3.

EACH series of seven, whether of the candlesticks, the seals, the trumpets, or the vials, is introduced by some appropriate and suggestive appearance of Christ. Here, for instance, the seven trumpets are restrained until this inspiring vision of the Redeemer is delineated as an imperishable fresco on the wall of Scripture.

It is not startling that He assumes here the appearance of an angel. This was His frequent guise in the ages which preceded His incarnation. And as to the priestly function here ascribed to Him, they are His habitual practice and wont throughout the present dispensation. He appears in the presence of God on our behalf. He has gone within the vail to make intercession for us. Such a Priest becomes us who is a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord has pitched, and not man. And since it is necessary that, as High Priest, He should have somewhat to offer, there is given to Him the praises, prayers, and gifts of the saints, that He should mingle them with the much incense of His own merit, and present them at the golden altar which is before the throne. Whenever we approach God in the name of Jesus we are really appealing to Him on the ground of that presentation, of that much incense, and the prevalence of that intercession.

Our prayers appear at times too utterly unworthy to bring to God. How can we dare to believe that they can be acceptable to the Holy God! Granted! It is all true. But never forget the much incense which is added to each petition; and remember that Christ gave Himself unto God, and is perpetually giving Himself, for us, an offering and a sacrifice, for an odor of a sweet smell.

Only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads.

Rev. ix. 4 (R. V.).

THIS reference carries us back to chap. vii., with its sublime description of the angel ascending from the sunrise, having the seal of the living God. He had cried with a great voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea (viii. 3).

The seal of God! Whatever that means in this pictorial or hieroglyphic book, we know what it means throughout the Epistles. The sealed have no doubt about their personal acceptance with God. They have set their seal to God, and He to them. They realize that they belong to Him in bonds of ownership which neither life nor death can dissolve. They bear upon their lives the impression of His image and superscription. They go to and fro about the world under the protecting escort of His high angels, who are commissioned to bring them safely to their Father's home. They have been anointed as kings and priests.

What a remarkable inference may be derived from the prohibition of the previous chapter, and the immunity accorded to the sealed ones in this! If the hordes of horsemen are withheld from touching the servants of God, whom the Angel sealed, we may infer, when no such caution is uttered about our lives, and no such immunity secured, that God has allowed pain, and sorrow, and death to hurt us for some sufficient reason—one which we shall be able to appreciate when we stand in His light. If He who has power to withhold the power of the adversary does not withhold it, the assaults which make our frail craft tremble from stem to stern must be His appointment and choice for us, and we must dare to look up into His face, and say, It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him good.

TIME is but an incident in the procession of eternity: a wreath of cloud on its expanse; a throb of its pendulum; a drop in its multitudinous ocean. There was a moment when it began; there shall be another of its pause and cessation.

But we may look for this expiration of the Time Ages without alarm. We have already received the germ of the eternal life, which existed before time began, and will last when it has fulfilled its course. "The witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life." We are the children of eternity; our eternal life dates from the moment of our regeneration; we know not how it befell, but we awoke in the time sphere to discover that we were objects of an eternal love, and that we are destined to a life which will outlast the universe of matter. From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God; and Thou hast made us partakers of Thy Divine Nature, who art, and wast, and art to come!

The margin suggests another rendering, that there should be no longer delay for the finishing of the mystery of God. From times eternal God has been elaborating His secret purpose, which surely must include the overruling of evil for good; the vindication of His permission of evil; and the final restitution of all things. For long that mystery has remained unfinished. God has not told His deep design. To many questionings He has given no reply. But the moment is at hand when the mystery of God will be finished, and the draping veil will be removed. Then, beloved, but not before, you will understand. Then you shall see the end from the beginning; and in God's light, see light.

There was seen in His Temple the Ark of His Covenant.

Rev. xi. 19 (R. V.).

WE are constantly encountering evidences that *the Bible is one*. Its writers are as various in their styles and characteristics as their respective ages; but they keep striking the same notes, and making allusion to the same objects. We have not heard of the Ark for centuries. Now we suddenly meet with it in a description of the coronation of the Son of Man. He has taken His great power and reigned. The kingdoms of the world have become His. The portals of the temple of God have been thrown open, and within is seen the Ark of the Covenant.

God will never forget His covenant.—When once He has pledged Himself to a nation or an individual, to Israel or Abraham, or to Christ and His seed, He will infallibly stand to it. All traces of His faithfulness may elude the eye of the earthly watchers, obliterated by the storms of sorrows that sweep the world; the very emblems of the covenant may have passed from human custody; and the time may be long—but at the destined hour the parted veil will reveal the Ark of the Covenant, as though to show that the victory of Christ was the fulfillment of that ancient pledge.

The covenant, which means blessing to God's children, is fraught with terror to His enemies.—“There followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.” It was so of old, when the ark brought deliverance to Israel, but disaster to Philistia. The savor of life and of death; the pillar of cloud which was light, and midnight darkness; the “Come, ye blessed,” and “Depart, ye cursed”—these alternatives are presented to us all.

They overcame Him because of the blood of the Lamb.
Rev. xii. 11.

THE overcoming and casting-out of Satan is the theme of the Book. First he overcomes ; then he is overcome. Overcome first by Christ ; and secondly by those who belong to Christ. Cast out from Heaven to the heavenly places or the air, of which as prince he wields the power. Cast out from there into the earth. Cast out thence into the bottomless pit. Cast out thence into the lake of fire. Such are the stages of the overthrow of the adversary of God and man.

Though Satan has no access to the presence of God now that the risen Saviour has entered there by virtue of His own blood, yet he may accuse us to our own conscience :

“ I hear the accuser roar
Of ills that I have done :
I know them well, and thousands more ;
Jehovah findeth none.”

How are such accusations to be met ? By the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony. There is no force so potent as the witness of the saints for truth, purity, and spirituality. Oh that there were more of this, by life and lip ! Oh that there were more unswerving loyalty to the King, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession !

For when this is so Satan gives back. The darkness cannot withstand the light. Victory is assured to those who love not their life unto the death, in their steadfast obedience to the truth. Then the fruit of the tree of life, immunity from the second death, the hidden manna, the white stone, the morning star, the confession before the angels of God, and the pillar in the temple of Eternity !

That no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark. Rev. xiii. 17.

FROM many hints dropped from time to time by business men it would seem as though the time described in these words is already being inaugurated. Christian men are finding it increasingly difficult to carry on their business without adopting a lower standard than that of the sanctuary. Tradespeople are strongly tempted to adopt two prices, adulterate, or sell beneath their samples. Workmen are hardly put to it when association with their fellows threatens to involve them in movements from which in their secret souls they revolt. How much business is done over the glass of wine or in the public-house !

Under these circumstances, Christians must resolve :

First, that they will not trifle with their conscience, but will dare in all respects to obey the law of Christ.—For every one there is an inevitable choice to be made and maintained, whether a clear conscience or a fortune is to hold the first place in their business career. At many a subsequent crisis the decision may be tested ; but the peril of reversing it will become always less.

Second, men must be content to bear poverty as part of the cross of Christ.—We admire and canonize the martyrs, but are strangely unwilling to face the disgrace of poverty, the dens and caves of the earth, which they endured for principle. Our religion will cost us something, or we may fairly question its vitality and worth. What a man will not suffer for he does not value.

Third, Christian people should teach their children the nobility of frugality, simplicity, and contentment.—There would be fewer hearts broken by prodigals if we lived as though Christian life did not consist in our possessions, but in God.

The first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb.

Rev. xiv. 4.

WHAT a word is here ! The apostle points to the radiant throng, grouped around Christ as His bodyguard of personal attendants. We had just beheld in the previous chapter the mighty legions mustering under the prince of darkness, and which furnish a strange contrast to this galaxy of strength and beauty. And as we wonder and admire, we are told that they are but as the first-fruit sheaf of the mighty harvest to be reaped from the earth.

By examining the first-fruit sheaf, we are able to tell the nature and quality of all the other sheaves that stand in the harvest-field under the golden autumn light. It is by studying the characteristics of these happy and holy spirits that we may learn what we shall be, and what the whole body of the elect shall be one day. Let us consider their number, their character, and their occupation.

Their number.—"With Him, a hundred and forty-four thousand." But if this vast multitude is only a sheaf, what will not the entire harvest be but a multitude which none shall be able to compute ?

Their character.—Stamped indelibly with the name of God and of the Lamb ; singing a new song, which only redeemed hearts can learn and redeemed lips utter ; virgin souls, clad in stainless purity, with no lie in their mouths, and no blemish in their lives ; purchased from among men to follow the Lamb. Such are they before the throne.

Their occupation.—Adoration : they sing a new song. Loyal obedience and companionship : they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. They cannot claim aught to themselves. Their whole story is told in the announcement that they were purchased—purchased by the blood of the Lamb they love.

Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the ages.

Rev. xv. 3 (R. V.).

THIS is the scene of the deliverance from Pharaoh on the shores of the Red Sea, translated into the imagery and language of eternity. The hosts of God shall emerge ere long from their long oppressions; by suffering they shall conquer; they shall come off victorious from the beast, and from His image, and from the number of His name. Behind them shall be spread out the sea of time, so calm and still, so hushed from all its tumult and storm, that it shall seem to be like sheets of glass; and as the morning of eternity breaks, it shall be drenched with fire. Fire here is probably an emblem of the holiness and the judgments of God.

Israel broke into rapturous thanksgiving, as the people saw their enemies dead upon the shore. "Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously!" But those triumphant notes, though chanted by an entire nation, shall be as a whisper compared with that song which shall break in thunder from the saints of all the ages. Those who were brought up under the dispensation of Moses, and the followers of the Lamb in the present dispensation, together with all holy souls who have overcome, shall constitute one vast choir.

But search the song of Moses as you will, you will fail to find one note that equals this in sublimity. Here are the saints of God, trained in distinguishing the niceties of righteous and holy government and behavior, enabled from their vantage-ground in eternity to survey the entire history of the Divine dealings, adoring Him as King of the Ages, and acknowledging that all His ways had been righteous and true. What a confession! What an acknowledgment!

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth.

Rex. xvi. 15.

THE Second Advent will come on men generally suddenly and unexpectedly. When they say, Peace and Safety, then sudden destruction shall overtake them, as travail a woman with child, and they shall not escape. With the rapidity of the lightning flash; with the suddenness of a flood or avalanche; with the surprise of the midnight robber—Christ will come. When men are asleep, when every bolt and fastening refuses admittance, when the streets are still and hushed, behold the Judge will stand before the door.

As Lightfoot, quoted by Dr. Macduff, suggests, the allusion may be to a Jewish custom in the service of the temple. Twenty-four wards or companies were appointed night by night to guard the various entrances to the sacred courts. One individual was appointed as captain or marshal over the others, called the "Man of the Mountain of the House of God." His duty was to go round the various gates during the night to see that his subordinates were faithful to their charge. Preceded as he was by men bearing torches, it was expected that each wakeful sentinel should hail his appearance with the password, "Thou Man of the Mountains of the House, peace be unto thee!" If through unwatchfulness and slumber this were neglected, the offender was beaten with the staff of office, his garments were burned, and he was branded with shame.

It was in contrast with these slumbering Levites that Jesus pronounces a blessing on His own people who watch and keep their garments, and are saved from the reproach of spiritual nakedness. Let us, therefore, wait for the promise of His coming, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God.

Drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. *Rev. xvii. 6.*

PAGAN and papal Rome have had to contend with an unbroken line of the witnesses of Jesus. In the words of an exiled Huguenot, "Since the birth of anti-Christianity, there have not been wanting those who have cried against its errors and idolatries." They have been called by various names—Paulicians, Waldenses, Albigenses, Wicliffites, Lollards, Lutherans, Zwinglians, Pietists, and Schismatics; but God never left Himself without witness. They might all have adopted the symbol and motto of one of them, "A lighted candle in a candlestick," with the words, "The light shineth in darkness."

But how terribly has the vision of the text been verified! Think of the persecutions under the Emperors, when the entire empire was filled with fire and sword. Take the single instance of the Empress Theodora, who slaughtered and drowned one hundred thousand of these Paulician Christians. During the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, Romanism, then in the plentitude of its power, gathered itself for a great, determined, and persistent effort to crush out all that opposed its supremacy, and to clear Christendom of heresy. And wherever any revival of true religion took place, or any confessors of Christ could be found, they were hunted, if possible, to death.

We have not yet resisted unto blood, in the strife against the sin and evil of our time. It is not that the world or the professing Church loves us better, but, probably, we are deficient in the spirit that lived in the martyr's breast. O Spirit of the Living God, kindle that flame of love again which shall make us willing to suffer the loss of all, even of life, for the sake of Jesus!

Come forth, My people, out of her.

Rev. xviii. 4 (R. v.).

WE cannot be surprised to find that God has people in the midst of Babylon. Probably in the most corrupt days there has always been a remnant of seven thousand who have not bowed the knee or kissed the hand to Baal. It is the presence of true, though benighted, piety which has perpetuated the existence of organizations which are an offence and a stumbling-block. But their presence in such company cannot be tolerated.

It is often argued that we should stay in the midst of churches and bodies whose sins and follies we deplore, in the hope of saving them for God and man. And such reasoning has a good deal of force in the first stages of declension. A strong protest may arrest error. A vigorous policy may stop the gangrene. But as time advances, and the whole body becomes infected and diseased; when the protests have been disregarded, and the arguments trampled under foot; when the majority have clearly taken up their position against the truth; when her sins have reached up to heaven, and the plagues are about to befall—there is need for another policy; we have no alternative but to come out and be separate, and not touch the unclean thing. “Let us, therefore, go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach.”

The place from which we can exert the strongest influence for good is not from within, but from without. Lot lost all influence of his life in Sodom; but Abraham, from the heights of Mamre, was able to exert a mighty influence on its history. Obadiah might hide the prophets of God by fifties in a cave; but Elijah, from the Mount of Carmel, was able to exterminate the priests of Baal, and call back again the people's hearts to God.

Blessed are they which are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Rev. xix. 9 (R. V.).

AT the epoch described in the text we behold the Church of Christ unveiled and visible to heaven and earth. She has laid aside her weeds of sorrow, her ashen garments, her evidences of persecution and rejection, and stands forth a monument of grace, the masterpiece of Christ, the joy of the Bridegroom's heart. There will be no churches then, but one Church, which will contain within her borders the believing ones of all the churches.

The marriage supper, it has been truly said, is the arrival of that epoch which the redeemed of every age have anticipated. It has been the longed-for day of patriarchs, the glowing prediction of prophets, the burden of songs, the hope of the Church, the era for which creation groans and the sons of God pray.

But there must be a present character to fit us for this future felicity. Who are they that are thus called to the marriage supper? They are of every kindred, nation, people, and tongue, who have accepted the promises and invitations of the everlasting Gospel, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Let us now pass on that invitation; let him that heareth say come. Let us go forth into the highways and hedges and compel men to come in, that God's feast may be furnished with guests. Let us not be content with the first refusal, or the second; but with eager persistency press on men the urgency of these closing hours of opportunity, remembering that, when once the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, it will be hopeless and impossible to secure an entrance. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

A great white throne.

Rev. xx. 11.

GREAT, because of the great causes that will be decided there; the great destinies that will impinge; the great God who will sit there; the great eternity which will be decided for good or bad.

White, because of its immaculate purity. Sir Walter Raleigh, involved in a network of malice, and unjustly condemned to die, turned from the earthly court in which he had suffered vile insult and cruel wrong to the thought of heaven's unimpeachable truth. Whilst being ferried from Westminster to his dark cell in the Tower, which we visit with hushed footsteps and bated breath, he wrote by lamplight of

“Heaven's bribeless hall,
Where no corrupted voices brawl,
No conscience molten into gold,
No forged accuser bought or sold,
No cause deferred, no vain-spent journey—
For Christ is there, the King's Attorney.”

A Throne, because a King will sit there, the Son of Man, the Son of God. What a change is here! He that hung upon the cross in shame, shall sit upon the throne in glory. He who stood condemned before the earthly tribunal, shall decide the destinies of the race, and reveal the principles of the Divine government.

But that judgment will not affect those who have fled to the refuge of His wounds. These cannot come into judgment. Let us always distinguish between the judgment of the world-spirit, when Jesus died; the judgment of sin on the cross; the judgment which awaits each believer as to the use he has made of his talents, and the work he has done in the world; and finally, the last great judgment which has to do with those who have refused the love and light of God, and have voluntarily cast in their lot with Satan.

The sea is no more.

Rev. xxi. 1 (R. v).

ALL through this book we hear the clash of the waves. Throughout there is the voice of many waters. But when there dawns on the eye of the seer the bright and blessed time, which is yet to come; when the new heavens and earth appear, this is among the chief attractions of that glorious world—that there is no more sea. The sea is a characteristic emblem of this age, but not of the next.

There shall be no more painful mystery.—To the Jew there was a double mystery in the sea—that which lay in its sunless caves, and that which lay beyond the rim of the horizon; and because there was mystery there was dread and alarm. We, too, live on the shores of mystery, and float above it, with only a plank between it and us. But there we shall know as we are known; our questions answered; our problems solved.

There shall be no more rebellious power.—The sea is the emblem of untamed power. Lashed into yeasty foam it drives the great ships before it and eats into the land. Men cry, Let us break His bands asunder, and cast away His cords. But God laughs at them. Remember the motto that England struck on its medal to celebrate the destruction of the Armada: “The Lord blew upon them, and they were scattered.” And so shall it be one day when all proud opposition to His will is vanquished.

There shall be no more disquiet and unrest.—Life is like a voyage over the sea—now miles of calm, then days of storm; now monotonous and slow progress, then the awful stress of peril and threatening death. Outside of Christ life is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, but casts up mire and dirt. But yonder there will be unbroken peace and rest.

*His servants shall serve Him ; and see His face ;
His name shall be in their foreheads. Rev. xxii. 3, 4.*

THESE are the three elements in heavenly bliss :

SERVICE.—In the disciples' prayer the Lord taught us that the will of God is done there. Not that there is any breach in its perfect rest. Activity there will be as easy and natural as the play of the bees among the limes, or of minnows in the pool. There will be no strain, no effort, no exhaustion. To stay those ministries which the blessed render to Him would be intolerable pain. They would be weary with forbearing, and could not stay.

VISION.—“They shall see His face.” Here, through a glass darkly ; there, face to face. Here, as when the two walked to Emmaus, and knew not their Companion, though their burning hearts might have told them the secret ; there, as when their eyes were opened, and they knew Him (though He will not vanish from our sight). Oh, what a glad surprise !

TRANSFIGURATION.—“His name shall be in their foreheads.” The name of God is the totality of the Divine perfection and beauty, and the bearing of His name on their foreheads indicates that they are becoming like Him, whilst they see Him as He is.

There the Bible closes its record, finding man in a garden, leaving him in a city ; demonstrating that where sin reigned unto death, there much more grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, giving man a more exalted and blessed lot than Adam enjoyed in the cool of the day in Eden.

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