1 Kings - Commentaries by Unknown Author

Young Christian: Volume 27, 1937, Trust Him Wholly

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“There hath not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised.” 1 Kings 8:56.

You will always find as you trust in the Lord that He is just as true as His Word. The devil may try to discourage God’s people, yet faith in God gives the victory. We find people today who are trying to keep themselves: if they would just trust in the Lord He would keep them.

Paul learned the secret of trusting in the Lord and so can God’s people of today. Christ says,

“Be of good cheer; for I have overcome the world.” John 16:33.

Young Christian: Volume 25, 1935, What Would We Ask for?

“The Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, Ask what I shall give thee” (1 Kings 3:5).

I wonder what each one of us would ask if we had a definite and munificent offer like that! I wonder what we really desire most just at present, what we are hoping and working for? What is our real and principal ambition in life? to get on in the world, to prosper in business, to amass wealth?

“When your ship comes home,” what cargo of dreams would she bring us, I wonder? Would we want our income doubled, or a mortgage paid off, or a year of travel, or, perhaps, a large sum of money which we think would put us beyond the reach of care and anxiety, and which would buy us happiness and many other things?

“O, that Thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested” (1 Chron. 4:10).

Words of Faith: Volume 2, Answers to Correspondents: 2 Cor. 12:16; Ex. 20:10, 1Ki. 22:19, Isa. 6:1-5, and John 1:18,37?

Q.-Can you throw any light upon 2 Cor. 12. 16-" being crafty, I caught you with guile"? A. R.

A.-It would appear to us that the meaning of this passage connects itself with the previous clause of the verse, as if the apostle took them on their own ground and answered, " Be it so;" as if they had said: "Yes, you were not burdensome to us yourself, just to save appearances, but you take from us by sending another to receive it for you!" To meet this base insinuation he asks the question, " Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?" Had Titus, or the brother sent with him by Paul made a gain of them? They knew better. He had not been crafty and caught them with guile in the way they suggested he had. The passage thus speaks of what the Corinthians had attributed to the apostle, and is not a statement by himself of the way he had acted towards them, as it apparently reads.

Q.-How do you reconcile Ex. 20:10; 1 Kings 22:19; Isa. 6:1-5, with John 1:18 and v. 37? A. R.

A.-The appearance or manifestation of God, suited to the comprehension and senses of man-a visible, external glory that witnessed to His power and supremacy in creation and government-is what is spoken of in the Old Testament scripture referred to; while the statements in John refer to His personal nature and being; it is of this latter the Lord Jesus speaks, and in this way no man has seen, or can see, God; as. such He dwells " in the light which no man approach unto." (1 Tim. 6:16.) Christ, as man, is the image and manifestation of the invisible God. C. W.

Correspondence, Correspondence: MAT 25:14-30; 1KI 22:14-16; 1TH 5:2; REV 3:10; REV 1:19

Ques. What are the Talents of Matt. 25:14-30, and to whom are they given? Are the Talents man’s ability, or money? How are the Talents gained?

Ans. The Talents of Matt. 25:14-30 are the gifts or abilities bestowed by the Lord upon each of His own, to be used for His glory.

Ques. Why did King Ahab rebuke Micaiah when he told him the same as the four hundred wicked prophets? (1 Kings 22:15-16). Micaiah had said (1 Kings 22:14), “As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.” And in verse 14 he told what the Lord had given him to say.

Ans. When Micaiah came into the presence of King Ahab, he was intimidated, and gave a false prophecy to escape the King’s wrath. But when his hypocrisy was detected by the King, he uttered the truth as the Lord had given it to him to speak.

Ques. Is 1 Thessalonians 5:2 Christ’s coming for us, or with us?

Ans. It is the day of the Lord, when He comes to assert His authority, and take the Kingdom. We appear with Him. It is when He comes as a thief in the night, an unwelcome and unlooked for visitor to the wicked. (Isa. 2:10-12; Joel 2:1-2, 28-32).

Ques. What is the “hour of temptation” in Revelation 3:10?

Ans. The “hour of temptation” is future. The saints will be kept from it by the Lord coming to take them to Himself. It will be during the time of “the great tribulation” after the Church is gone to be with Him. “Those that dwell on the earth” are a special class who claim the earth—earthly minded (Phil. 3:19).

Ques. Please explain Revelation 1:19.

Ans. “The things which thou hast seen” includes Revelation 1:12-18.

“The things that are” is the period of the Church’s history on earth.

“The things that shall be hereafter,” or “after these things” is the future, commencing with the 4th chapter. The Church is still on earth, and no prophecy is to be fulfilled till we are with the Lord in heaven. The wars, pestilence, famines, earthquakes, etc., that take place now, are not foretold in Scripture. We are simply told to wait for the Son from heaven. The Church is being gathered now. The Bright and Morning Star may soon be ours. Till then no prophecy can be fulfilled, not even the “beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:8), do we look for.

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled,” etc. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. This is the first thing to happen, and how soon we may see Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us!

Christian Friend: Volume 12, 1 Kings 19:1-3

We see here how far the energy of the outward life of faith may continue to exist, while the inward life grows weak. It was at the moment of the most striking testimony to the presence of God in the midst of the rebellious people, and when Elijah had just caused all the prophets of Baal amongst them to be slain by the people’s own hands, that his faith entirely fails at a mere threat from Jezebel. His life was not inwardly sustained by this faith in proportion to the outward testimony. His testimony excites the enemy in a way for which his personal faith was not prepared. This is a solemn lesson. The still small voice (which, unknown to him, was still heard among the people) had not perhaps its due influence upon his own heart, where the fire and manifestations had held too much place. Thus he did not know himself the grace which was still in exercise towards the people; he could not love them for the sake of the seven thousand faithful ones, as God loved them, nor hope as charity hopes. Alas! what are we, even when so near God! And his complaint when he came to God, for a person so blessed, has a sad deal of self in it. “I have teen zealous,” he says, “ and they have cast down thine altars, and killed thy prophets;” just when he had cast down Baal’s altars, and killed all his prophets; and then, “I am left alone.” It is a humbling testimony.

J. N. D.

Girdle of Truth: Volume 3, Faith's Answer

1 Kings 18:41-46

The great blessing of faith is that it links our souls with God. It is a secret Communication, establishing relations of confidence and repose between the earth and God. Faith exists unknown to any one but its possessor and God. It shows its vitality by works, but its vitality is its enjoyment, and not its power of demonstrating itself.

The history of its action is an interesting, instructive study. Dependence on God, or faith, is the first element of our new life, the great antagonistic principle of the old nature. " Whatever is not of faith is sin" is the abstract rule of life. My will, in nature, being errant, all my power, natural or acquired, acts so as to sustain what is wrong, that is, my natural will. Well! but now as quickened by the life of Christ into the sensibilities of His nature, I am constantly finding that difficulties occur to me, all the greater because my will runs counter to God's will. Nay more, I find that many new desires are awakened within me, which I have no power in nature to gratify. In both these cases I learn that I must lean on God; and as I lean-and I know what is His mind' or intention towards me-so have I faith or confidence in Him about any' given result.

It is evident we know too little of this blessed sentiment, and this arises from our great self-dependence. Whether it be as regards difficulties in our path unsurmounted, or good desires ungratified, we do not lean sufficiently on the Lord, and have not the sweet and invigorating consciousness of His direct assistance in supplying our need. We are constantly helped by His mercy and providence, and though we may then recognize His hand and thank Him, yet this is not walking in faith. Faith, I repeat, is the great principle of life. I open my eyes, confident that I shall see; if I did not it would be a great marvel to me: and every demand that my natural mind makes on me assumes that my life and strength are equal to that demand, and will accord it. So likewise with living faith. My difficulties and desires are before the Lord. I know they are, and I know that He is the true source of help; and as I make demand on Him, I know the amount which he will render to me according to my sense of His ability as engaged for me. A man who rightly knows his own powers would never tax them beyond their ability, wisely ordered, but so far as he feels their ability, he can tax them to the utmost; and this is faith. It is then a secret conviction, known only to myself, of God's grace towards me. I rest in it: my heart is strengthened and blessed by it. There is nothing so blessed as to understand that faith is an individual secret between our souls and God-that God who gave His Son for us. This is always the proof to us of what His heart is, for no other blessing could ever establish us before Him as this does.

Now then, seeing that faith is an individual secret, how comes it that so many desire that what is so close, personal, solemn, and divine, should be proved as having existed by evidences that will convince the crowd? Your secret exists, and you cannot explain it, and you ought not: it is too sacred, and yet you wish that the public should know that this sacred confidence has produced certain results in a very distinguished manner. That there will be results there can be no question perfect results, accurate according to the demand you made, and (as I have said) to your sense of God's ability as engaged for you; but that the results or answer should be to any one out- side the range of the necessity, I cannot and must not expect. Suppose I entrust my difficulties or desires to a human friend, who I am sure will co. operate with me and relieve me; is it necessary that in doing so he must publish his assistance and service? By no means. If he has convinced me of it, no matter how he accorded it, he has assured the affection and confidence

Which reckoned on him; and this we desire from a friend far more than that others should acknowledge what he has done. God in His love wants to reveal Himself to our souls, and if He answers our faith so as to make us feel that it is He alone that has done it, He cares not for the publication of it. Nay more, He will often make it of very insignificant appearance, in order that the soul may be kept in the blessing of the secret assurance of faith, which will progress, step by step, with the evidence, if the evidence is not too great to make faith no longer necessary. The moment we are in sight we are out of faith. God could never desire to put us outside faith now; hence, even in answering our faith, He so answers it that we want it in a moment again, even while enjoying the result. He cannot distinguish man as man, but He loves man and will make man depending on Him to FEEL it; consequently, in order to keep the soul in full blessing, the Lord must keep it in faith; and if He communicates to my own heart the answer to my faith, He has done all I have required of Him. The apostle Paul knew God's love and power in the answer which he received to his faith in the salvation of the crew, (Acts 27) though to human eye it was a sorry provision and a scrambling escape to save 276 souls, "some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship."

But what matter how man judged, if the heart of the apostle had its secret confidence responded to? If he knew that the power of God had interposed for him, he was not careful that others should know more than the result. In the passage before us, 1 Kings 18:41-46, which is referred to in James 6 as an exposition of "effectual, fervent prayer," we find, first, the faith which can say to Ahab, "Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a noise of abundance of rain." Faith cometh by hearing; the intimation had reached the prophet; he had heard the sound thereof; he had the secret consciousness in his soul that he was drawing on the abilities of God to meet the vase; and he could speak of what that power would accomplish, though as yet he had no more intimation of it than a "sound." No one understood this "sound" but himself, neither could he communicate it to another, although he could speak of the effect. This conviction the soul obtains in communion with God. It is but a conviction-a "sound;" but yet it is the warrant to the soul, knowing the strength and grace it rests on, to expect an amount of relief commensurate with its reliance on them. In a word, it is resting on the strength offered me by God, and my soul receives the conviction of what that power can and will do. Elijah can without hesitation propose to the king to "get up, eat and drink," in the assured hope of rain. But what is his own course? He retires to the top of Carmel, casts himself upon the earth, and puts his face between his knees. This teaches us the edition of a believing soul. It has the intimation of the coming blessing, it can speak of it. But this does not lead to indifference or indolence; nay; rather, the soul, burdened by the wondrous reality of trusting God, is engrossed with the subject the more as it approaches fulfillment. According to the exhortation in Col. 4:2, it "continues in prayer and watches in the same," &c., being quite awake to the manifestations of fulfillment. The prophet sends his servant to look toward the sea, but there is nothing to be seen at first. The word is, "Go again seven times:" prayer and watching must be perfect. "And it came to pass the seventh time, that be (the servant) said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand." Could there possibly be a smaller indication of coming rain? A cloud the size of a man's: hand is hardly visible on the horizon. What patience to send seven times! What carefulness of observation to discern anything so insignificant, and after all to learn so little! But faith wanted no more; the soul rested in God, and only prayed and watched till demonstration was granted; and at the smallest notice, the heart was entirely assured; and the prophet tells Ahab, Prepare thy chariot; get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." Thus are we instructed in the nature of the "effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man," i.e., one seeking to go rightly. No one can lean on God to be sustained in wrong; but to be sustained in, and strengthened for, what is right, is not only to be expected, but it is sin if we seek relief otherwise; because we must, in that case, be leaning on something besides God, and what we lean on we magnify.

In conclusion, we require, first, Faith (or the secret conviction of help from God) to invigorate the soul with a sense of the ability which is engaged for it.

Secondly, the praying, wakeful condition of soul which is conscious of the solemn-blessing vouchsafed to it until the moment of fulfillment comes.

Lastly, not to seek great or pompous evidences of the fulfillment, but with the true sensibility of affection to interpret the smallest notification, because the more intimate any one is with another, the sooner and easier will they understand their simplest gestures and promptings.

The Lord give us grace to enter into the life of the One blessed man down here, ever leaning on God, ever sensible in Himself of the sweet consciousness that He could count on the abilities of God. " Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always:" and this is the Blessed One who lives for us, and whose life is ours with all its susceptibilities, "to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

Eastern Manners and Customs Illustrating Various Bible Passages, Eastern Manners and Customs: Girding of the Loins; "Follow Me"; Perfect; "My Brethren"

" The hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and lie girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."-1 Kings 18:46.

The long flowing robes still worn in the East render the " girding of the loins " necessary whenever an exercise of energy or of activity is required. Bishop Wordsworth says: "The mode of doing honor to Ahab by running before his chariot was in accordance with the customs of the East. It is performed by a class of persons called skaters in Persia, where it is regarded as a necessary part of royal state to have runners at their side when they are on horseback." Dr. Thomson also writes: "I was reminded of this incident of Elijah at Jaffa, when Mohammed Ali came to that city to quell the rebellion of Palestine. The officers were constantly going and coming, preceded by runners, who always kept just ahead of the horses, no matter how furiously they were ridden: and in order to run with the greatest ease they girded their loins very tightly... Thus, no doubt, did Elijah. The distance from the base of Carmel across the plain to Jezreel is not less than twelve miles, and the race was

probably accomplished in two hours, in the face of storm of wind and rain. It was necessary that the hand of the Lord should be upon the prophet, or he would not have been able to achieve it."

Follow Me." John 21

In John we see the confidence and simplicity of love. Though he makes little noise, he always follows Jesus. He incessantly expects Him, and thus he recognizes Him even before Peter-the most zealous of disciples. It is only his intimate acquaintance with Jesus gives him this advantage. Love is calm, and finds its enjoyment in its object. John passes through few painful experiences like those of Peter. The perfect love of Jesus banishes all fear from His disciple; it slays also the activity of the flesh, and keeps his heart engaged with its object.

John is neither jealous of Peter, nor restless about his brother who is on his way to death. Peter on the contrary disquiets himself about John; who in the meantime is occupied about Jesus, and remains perfectly calm and at rest even while following his master, whom he is accustomed to follow, and gaze upon, and listen to; Jesus needs not to say to John, "Follow me."

Perfect, not Sinless. Matt. 5:48; 1 John 3:9.

The first of these texts has no bearing whatever on the question of perfection in the flesh. It is the revelation of the name of our Father which is in heaven, and the character practically which suits the kingdom of heaven. The mere Jew was responsible to render testimony to the righteousness of Jehovah; the believer now is responsible to show forth the grace of "Our Father." Vengeance on the Canaanites was then a righteous thing; now " if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." The children are bound to sustain the family character, " that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Other Scriptures prove, if proof were needed, that sin still abides in the saint here below, however bound he is to disallow and mortify it. This text simply exhorts us to imitate our Father's grace, even to those who deserve His judgment.

The other Scripture (1 John 3:9) regards the child of God in that point which distinguishes him from the world, in the possession of a life from God which is absolutely sinless. No intelligent Christian will therefore forget that the flesh is still in us, though we are no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

My Brethren. Matt. 25:40.

I think that it is clear and certain that those whom " the King" designates as His brethren here, are a distinct class from the sheep. It is not denied that all God's saints are, or may be viewed as " sheep." All that is now contended nor is, that in this scene we have certain godly Gentiles blessed, and inheriting the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, but at the same time distinguished from others styled the King's brethren, who had previously put these sheep to the test, and been the occasion of showing their difference from the goats, or the unbelieving Gentiles, who had dishonored the King in His messengers. I add that the scene is a millennial one; not the gathering of the saints risen or changed before the millennium; not the judgment of the dead after it, but a scene on earth of living nations dealt with according to their reception or rejection of the King's brethren just before this judgment (Matt. 24:14).

Young Christian: Volume 27, 1937, In Thy Youth

“I Thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.” (1 Kings 18:12).

What a blessed statement of Obadiah’s! The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and if we know Him as our Saviour, and start with true wisdom (the fear of the Lord), our path will be a happy one in serving Him.

We call to mind what a dear old brother, who is now with the Lord, said, when addressing a number of young Christians,

“You, dear young people, in all the freshness and bloom of youth, remind me of a very beautiful bouquet of flowers. Suppose you desire to present to a dear friend of yours a very beautiful bouquet. You purchase it, and it is so beautiful that you wish to keep it for yourself the first day. The second day you admire it so much that you still keep it; but the third day you notice it is beginning to wither, and you hasten to give the faded bouquet to your friend.

“Do not treat the Lord in this way. Give yourselves to Him while in your vigor and strength. Serve Him with your whole heart. Remember what He has done for you.”

O! how little do Christian young men and women appreciate the blessing of giving God their youth—their best days, the strongest and heartiest time of their short life!

“In thy youth,” dear reader, give yourself to God for His service and honor. “In thy youth,” be out and out for Christ, a good soldier for Him. Say not in your heart,

“Why should I not delight myself in the world and its joys, as do others?” for Jesus, the Son of God beckons you to a nobler life; He calls you to self-sacrifice and devotion, in which you shall have joys beyond all that this poor world ever gave to its servants.

Dear young Christians, the truly happy life is that which is given to the Lord. There are more joys found in His service than in all the pleasures of the world, and we appeal to you, now in your youth, to devote yourselves to Him.

Young Christian: Volume 31, 1941, Sound of Abundance of Rain, A

These words were spoken by Elijah the prophet, to Ahab King of Israel (1 Kings 18:41). No refreshing shower had fallen during a period of three years and six months, and not a cloud was rising from the horizon when this man of faith and prayer gave utterance to this hopeful sentiment.

Some of us can look back twenty years, and thirty years or even fifty years ago. What seasons of blessing in the gospel! What times of conversion amid all classes of society! The Spirit of God was moving in mighty power through the land. But of late it has not been so. A widespread apathy and indifference has pervaded the borders of Christendom. There has been an abundance of work – hard work, too; there has been much preaching – earnest preaching, faithful preaching; but the results have not been such as to encourage with the thought that many were being led to the Lord. This has been the universal and widely expressed feeling of all who have labored in the gospel field.

Brethren, has there been that spirit of prayer which at one time prevailed?

“Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” James 5:17, 18.

We write these few lines to stir up every Christian who may be a reader of our magazine to earnest, believing, and continued prayer – definite prayer, too, for definite results.

We believe the coming of the Lord is drawing nigh, and we trust that a great gathering of souls will take place e’er He comes.

Why are we writing? That both writer and reader may have the joy, the privilege, and the honor of having a little share in this God-honoring, Christ-exalting, glorious work of bringing others to the Saviour.

We would affectionately and earnestly suggest meetings for special prayer in every locality where this little magazine circulates, that God will come in and work mightily for the honor of His great Name, for the glory of Christ, for the blessing of His people, and for the salvation of souls.

“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My House may be filled.” Luke 14:23

Things New and Old: Volume 1, Sareptan and the Shunammite, The

(1 Kings 17:9-24, 2 Kings 4:8-37.)

It is a most profitable exercise for the heart to trace the varied effects of divine discipline, as exhibited in the history of the people of God. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” (Rom. 15:4-5) It is so very encouraging to find, in the word of God, that He has, from the beginning, been dealing with “men of like passions’s with ourselves. For somehow, one is tempted, at times, to think there never was one, in all the ranks of God’s redeemed, like me. Hence it is that the Holy Ghost has, in perfect grace and wisdom, left on record such a variety of cases in which we may recognize, as it were, a full-length portrait of our very selves.

In the Sareptan and Shunamite we have two women who were honored of God in being allowed to entertain, successively, His prophets Elijah and Elisha. But they furnish two very different types of character. Indeed, they exhibit as striking a contrast in their spiritual history, as they do in their natural condition and circumstances.

In the first place, let us look at the Sareptan. “The word of the Lord came unto Elijah, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.” (1 Kings 17:8, 9.) This was a most remarkable command, whether we look at it in reference to Israel, to Elijah, or to the poor Gentile widow. As to Israel, it spoke volumes. The Lord’s prophet called to be a debtor to the ministrations of a Gentile! This was, truly, a striking commentary upon Israel’s condition. The bare reference to it, ages afterward, in the synagogue of Nazareth, cut the Jews to the heart, and filled them with wrath. (Luke 4) It told the double tale of their ruin, and of grace to the Gentiles. It pointed forward to a period when drought and sterility should prevail throughout the promised land, and the dayspring from on high should visit the Gentiles.

Then, as to the prophet, it was just an emptying from vessel to vessel. The ravens and the brook Cherith had been ministering to his need; but now he must pass into other circumstances, and be a debtor to a poor Gentile widow. And what were her resources? Hear her own piteous tale: “As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” Gloomy enough in the judgment of nature! But faith looked beyond the almost empty barrel and exhausted cruse, to that liberal hand which was able to fill both the one and the other. Had Elijah been walking by the sight of his eyes, his heart would have utterly failed him at the prospect which met his view, “when he came to the gate of the city.” But he knew in whom he had believed, and was persuaded that the God of Israel could feed him, by the hand of a starving widow of the Gentiles, just as easily as by the instrumentality of ravens.

Finally, as to the Sareptan herself, she was in the very best possible position to prove the reality of that grace which was flowing beyond the enclosure of Israel, to reach to those who were “strangers and foreigners.” But, then, we find the blessing had to be forced upon her. She would rather not have had it. Her heart was not prepared to prize the holy dignity which was being conferred upon her. She would fain have put it from her. She had to be “compelled” to taste of the fullness of divine love and mercy. There was slowness of heart to commit herself to the truth of the promise. Alas! how like her are we!

How tardy are we to open our mouths wide! How unwilling to lean on the promise of God, because we know so little of the God of the promise!

But not only was she unwilling to be a recipient of divine grace, she was also unable to interpret the voice of divine judgment. “It came to pass, after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?” How little have we, here, of the dignity of a soul in communion with God! How little of the calm and holy subduedness of

one passing through divine discipline, in the secret of the divine presence! “What have I to do with thee?” This question exhibits the impatience and fretfulness of unsubdued nature—terrible evils! Again, “Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance?” All this argues a very low spiritual condition. The object of divine discipline can only be understood, in the light of the divine presence, and if that object be lost sight of, the soul is in danger of losing the “profit” which such discipline is designed to yield. “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness.” Unto whom? “Unto them which are exercised thereby.” (Heb. 12:2.) There is far more depth in the words “afterward” and “exercised” than the majority of us are aware of.

The Sareptan seemed to think there could be no other object, in the Lord’s dealings, than, to “bring her sin to remembrance.” Blessed be God, the believer is privileged to know that God “has cast all his sins behind His back”—that they are plunged in the waters of eternal forgetfulness. Hence, He can never do aught for the purpose of bringing sin to remembrance. His own peace-giving assurance is, “their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” (Heb. 10:17.) Instead of seeing the sins of His people, God sees only the blood of His own dear Son which has blotted them out forever. If their sins could ever again come into God’s view, or into God’s remembrance, it could only argue that the blood of the cross was not sufficient to cancel them.

What, then, is the object of God’s discipline or chastisement? “That we might be partakers of his holiness.” (Heb. 12:10.) It is not for the remembrance of sins which He has promised to “remember no more.” Nor is it for the punishment of sins which were all judged in the Person of the Sin-bearer, on the cross. The object is stated to be, “That we might be partakers of His holiness.” And again, “When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (1 Cor. 11:32) Thus, it is neither to remember nor punish sin: it is that we should not be condemned with the world, but be partakers of the holiness of God.

It is well to be clear as to this, not only as it respects our own spiritual history, but also that we may avoid a habit which many fall into, of surmising evil in the case of any one who may be passing, in any way, under the rod. There are some who, the moment they see a Christian visited with chastening, judge, like the Sareptan, that it must needs be to “bring sin to remembrance.” This is a serious mistake which we ought carefully to guard against.

We may easily see from the effect of the discipline, in the case of the Sareptan, what was the object of it. She says, on receiving her son from the dead, “Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.” (1 Kings 17:24.) It was to lead her into the knowledge of what she ought to have known, at a much earlier point in her career. How often is this the case with us! How much truth have we professed, which our souls never knew experimentally until we were brought into the deep waters of affliction, that we might be chastened, disciplined, and exercised, under the hand of “the Father of spirits.”

And, here, let me say, that the Shunamite began where the Sareptan left off. “It fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that, as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. And she said unto her husband, “Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God which passeth by us continually.” (2 Kings 4:8, 9.) She recognized, at once, by the exercise of a spiritual judgment, what the Sareptan had to be taught by a heavy affliction. In a word, we have in the Shunamite, a pupil higher up in the school of Christ than the Sareptan. Everything about her bears the stamp of advanced scholarship. She moves before the spiritual eye, with a dignity, an elevation, a moral grace, peculiar to those who breathe the air of the inner sanctuary. It is not, by any means, that the grace which visited “the great woman” of Shunem, was a whit brighter or richer than that which had reached “the widow woman” of Sarepta. Quite the contrary. The grace which could travel out to an alien of the Gentiles, was even richer than that which acted within the enclosures of Israel.

Furthermore, the difference in these two women was not merely a difference of circumstances. True, the Sareptan was a poor widow, who had to stand, with anxious mind and troubled heart, over a “handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse,” and from her thrifty plans, to make the trifle go as far as possible. Whereas, the Shunamite was “a great woman,” surrounded with abundance. Again, the prophet had to constrain the Sareptan to give him bread; the Shunamite had to constrain the prophet to take it. These, no doubt, are points of difference; but they are only circumstantial and not personal. The real difference lay not in the condition but in the communion; and this difference is apparent, in every movement of the Shunamite.

She has a want which neither “the king” nor “the captain of the host” can supply. She ardently longs to know the quickening power of the God of resurrection. She sighs to occupy the same ground with the Sarahs and the Hannahs of former generations. She desires to behold the Living God, traveling in the greatness of His strength and triumphing, in her case, over all the weakness and death of nature. She longs to bask in the very brightest beams of the divine glory—to have communion with the very highest truth—to tread the highest walks in the divine life.

Such were the aspirations of the Shunamite. She was not, like the Sareptan, contemplating death, standing at the other side of an exhausted barrel and cruse; she rather saw the God of resurrection, at the other side of nature’s death and barrenness. Her faith expected “great things” from the Living God, and she was not disappointed. She was allowed to “embrace a son.” She was permitted to experience, in her own person, “the power of resurrection.” With her, it was not the God of Providence filling the barrel, but the God of resurrection quickening the dead.

Then again, mark her, as she bows her head in the presence of the divine visitation. Instead of having, like the Sareptan, to go down into the depths to get her knowledge, she carries her knowledge into the depths, and, as a consequence, she gets deeper knowledge still. The Sareptan stood in the presence of death, knowing nothing of resurrection. The Shunamite, in the power of resurrection, was enabled to walk, as a conqueror, through the circumstances of death. (Comp. Phil. 3:10.) She was enabled to lay her dead son where she had, already, laid her dead body, even at the feet of the God of resurrection, who, she knew, could quicken the one as well as the other. Can anyone fail to see the difference? Alas! it is to be feared, that too many of us know but little of this. Too many of us are satisfied with the low ground of the Sareptan, instead of earnestly breathing after the elevated ground of the Shunamite. We count ourselves happy if we find the barrel and cruse replenished by a liberal Providence, and fail to seek after that deeper character of fellowship which flows from a view of God that raiseth the dead. Truly sweet are the providential mercies of our God; but surely there is something higher far than these. There is communion with Himself. And where is this to be tasted? At the other side of death. It does not need resurrection to replenish a barrel and cruse; but it does to quicken a dead body and raise a dead son.

Obviously, therefore, the Shunamite stood on loftier ground than the Sareptan. Subjects of grace they both were, assuredly, but though the subjects of the same grace, their communion was very different. To the Sareptan death was bringing her sin to remembrance. To the Shunamite, death was only furnishing a sphere in which the God of resurrection might show Himself. The Sareptan said to the man of God, “what have I to do with thee?” The Shunamite would not have “to do” with anyone else.

Thus much as to the difference between these honored women, when passing through similar circumstances. But, then, the Shunamite leaves the Sareptan far behind. The former was carried, by the pinions of a more vigorous faith, into regions which the latter could not reach. She moved in a far higher sphere of communion. The spiritual world has its spheres, as well as the natural or the social world; and the sphere in which we move will depend upon the measure of our communion; and our communion will be according to our faith. Now, the Shunamite seems to have moved in the very highest spiritual circle. Her knowledge of God and His ways was profound. She was in possession of a secret which she could not communicate, either to her husband, or to the official Gehazi. Neither the one nor the other could have understood her. She had shut the door upon her dead son, and turned her back upon the dark chamber of death, as much as to say that no one could or ought to enter there save the God of resurrection. She just wrote upon a check the amount of her need, and took it to Jehovah to sign it. Did He refuse? Did He complain of the amount? Oh! no; the faith of this noble woman was bringing Him into a scene where, above all others, the beams of His glory could shine in all their luster. He could fill a dark chamber with light, and a silent chamber with the accents of life. This was glorious work, and faith knew that God could do it. “It shall be well,” and “it is well,” said the Shunamite; for her whole soul was filled with the assurance that the beloved object which she had just left in the chamber of death, would be raised by the God of resurrection. And she was not disappointed. “Then she went in and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.” “When the God of resurrection had been there as an actor, she could go in as a worshipper.

Christian reader, let us learn from this Shunamite to seek a closer, deeper, more personal walk with God.

Edification: Volume 9, Ascended Man., The

ELIJAH’S character is portrayed in the very first mention of him. There (1 Kings 17:1) we see the whole man, living and moving before us. His appearances, like his going, were sudden and spectacular. As from nowhere he appears before Ahab and we are abruptly set at once in the midst of his life.

It is no mere pedantry to attach importance to the names of God’s servants, or indeed, to any name mentioned in the Bible. The names of Scripture characters were often given by God Himself, and were indicative of divine promise or assurance, or of their character or calling. Striking examples of this are Noah, Abraham, Othniel, Antipas, etc. Frequently they served, like bells on the priests’ garments, to keep, ever fresh, the remembrance of Jehovah. The name of this fearless man of God is no exception. It means “My God is the Lord.” How appropriate it was any reader of his divinely given history will at once see. The power of this was in his soul, and without hesitation he could walk, on one occasion, right into the presence of Ahab who had sworn his death and leave that monarch speechless. It was not that Jehovah strengthened Elijah, but that Jehovah Himself was his strength. A distinction with a difference. As to his moral condition the words “before whom I stand” would appear to indicate both his standing and the characteristic state of his inward life.

By far the most remarkable instance in this prophet’s life is that which is recorded in 2 Kings 2 His arduous labor upon earth is finished. Like a mariner, who, after a long and perilous voyage approaches his harbor, he is about to strike sail. The chariot of Israel and the horses thereof will take him to another and blissful world. This chapter, which begins typically in the glory and ends in millennial blessing lends itself to a triple division. Clearly this is (1) A vivid picture of our Lord’s stoop from the glory to the cross and back again as the Ascended Man; (2) A picture of grace meeting and blessing sinners; (3) A word of warning to scoffers. We would confine our remarks in this short paper to the first of these divisions.

If we fail carefully to note Elijah’s starting place we shall lose a great deal of the beauty and moral import of this chapter. It is of great help to consult a map of Palestine for Gilgal’s geographical position. Just west of Jordan, be it noted, is that Gilgal at which the people of Israel passed the first night after crossing the river. This is below Bethel and Jericho. From this place it is impossible to go down (verse 1) to Bethel. The solution to the apparent difficulty is that the Gilgal of the Jordan bank, so rich in typical teaching, was not Elijah’s starting point at all. This is confirmed by the fact that in Joshua and 1 Samuel the journey from Gilgal to the neighborhood of Bethel is spoken of as an ascent. But there is, perched up in the heights just ten miles north of Bethel, another Gilgal from which Elijah set out upon his memorable descent. Even to this day the ruins stand and the place is called Jiljilia.

If Canaan speaks to us of heavenly places can Gilgal of the heights speak to us of anything less than the glory? For even as Elijah went from thence to Bethel, so that perfectly obedient One stepped down to the house and to the people of God. “The Lord has sent me to Jericho” There was no tarrying at Bethel for Elijah. He was on his way to the Jordan of death. Again and again the Lord presented Himself to His own, always to be refused. He presented Himself also to man under the curse. Just how far He stooped we can learn from Philippians 2. The light from the New Testament illumines the Old and in the rays of that light the chapter before us displays in beautiful type the whole journey made by our gracious Lord from the glory to the cross, and back again to the place He now adorns as the Ascended Man.

Thrice, at Gilgal, at Bethel and at Jericho, did Elijah entreat Elisha, his companion, to leave him. Thrice Elisha gave the same decided reply, “As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.” So the “two went on” and they crossed Jordan together. In two ways is the death of the Lord seen. As the atoning Substitute He was absolutely alone; but as Head of the New Creation we are reckoned to have died with Him.

Elisha’s attitude calls for further comment. He was far and away ahead of any of the sons of the prophets, for they “stood afar off.” It is one thing to see that Jesus has died for our sins and quite another to accept the place of death with Him. In this matter we can cross with Him or “stand afar off.”

Elijah’s bold invitation to Elisha met with an equally bold request. “Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me,” he asked. “If thou see me,” Elijah replied, “when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee.” Nothing could be more important than this. To become possessed of that

for which he asked it was imperative that he should see Elijah taken up. He had keenly observed the descent but that would not bring the blessing he desired. No! he must see the ascended man who had crossed Jordan. When this came about he took hold of his clothes and rent them and “took also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him.”

It is very precious to see the path of our Lord down from glory, down, down to death itself. But He that descended has also ascended. If Christ is not risen our faith is vain. It is as important for us to see the Ascended Man Christ Jesus as it was for Elisha to behold the ascending Elijah. The effect upon Elisha was very like the effect the sight of the ascended Jesus had upon Saul at the Damascus gate. Henceforth to be “found in Him” was his desire.

The returning Elisha passes over the powerless waters. The spirit of the ascended man now rests upon the one left behind. As for the sons of the prophets, they were content to stand afar off. Lacking spiritual energy they stayed at Jericho. What effect this had upon them is clearly to be seen in the methods adopted to find Elijah. They could not rise to the idea of an ascended man, consequently they sent fifty strong men to search for him, in spite of Elisha’s emphatic command. Dismally they failed.

Are we walking in the power of Elisha’s secret, confirmed by that faith which is the evidence of things unseen? The Lord is not to be found by earth’s methods. He is in the place of glory and power. May grace be given to us by faith to see Him there! The measure in which this becomes real in Our lives will he the measure in which spiritual vigor and courage will characterize us, whether it be serving in Jericho — the place under the curse — or meeting the unbelief of Bethel— that which professes to be the house of God.

S. O. Thurston.

Present Testimony: Volume 2, 1850, Old Prophet of Bethel, The

The effect of sin was to separate the heart from God; so the conduct of sinners (Rom. 3:18); " There is none that seeketh after God." The natural heart is opposed to God; and the enmity already there, is increased by the subtlety of Satan, in order that he may keep it from Him, whom to know is life and peace. When, in His grace, the soul is quickened and brought nigh by the blood of Christ, the hostility of Satan ceases not. A present God, is present power. The enemy of souls seeks to undermine our dependence upon God, and thus separate us from Film. In the former case, security is pledged; in the latter, endangered. And if life (" because he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself") is certain, yet fruit-bearing ceases, and the Lord is not honored. Whilst rejoicing in the salvation provided for us in the gospel, we must remember the object of it, in that God may be glorified in us. And to this object Satan is opposed. Many are the ways by which he succeeds. Oftentimes by exciting to evil, for the chaff is still in us, and needs but the fuel to ignite. But the believer escapes to his hiding-place (Psa. 32:7). He knows the enemy in this form and avoids him. Or if taken unawares, yet the source of the evil is detected, confessed and forgiven (1 John 1:9). But the enemy is not put down or turned from his purpose. if he cannot work to our injury by things which are evil, he will strive to do it by that which is good. The good which flows from God shall be presented as food for the soul, instead of the God who supplied it. The fruits of faith in God, instead of the God of the fruits. And it is just here where his success has been most eminent. If the bait, in the form of gross evil, is not taken, and his presence detected, yet, transformed into an angel of light, he succeeds. The world and its allurements may be overcome; but that which is good being perverted to raise a reputation for ourselves, instead of bringing glory to God; by that we fall. The precept being regarded-" When ye have done all, say ye are unprofitable servants"- is the state of heart which preserves. But, alas! who is sufficient for these things!

We have, in the subject before us, an instructive lesson. Judgment pronounced upon evil by the prophet of the Lord, and the reception he met with. The opposition of the king, and the power of God supporting his servant. The servant's faithfulness in obeying the commandment and in refusing a reward; closing with his fall and the occasion of it. He is proof against temptation when presented in the form of evil, and he falls when tempted by apparent good. The voice of a brother, his standing and reputation, are honored above the word of God. He disobeys the former and accredits a lie in the latter.

The Holy Ghost is silent as to the sin of the old prophet of Bethel. The sin of the one against his neighbor is clear; but the sin against God in the other's disobedience is clearer. We are often taken up with that which is an injury to many, regardless of that which is done against God. Many can contend earnestly for love to the brethren, and warmly resent failure in this respect, yet remain unmoved when the truth of God, on which it is based, is sought to be undermined. We cannot hold the truth, without love to the brethren being a consequence. The fruit-bearing which-flows from communion with God is the evidence of it. " Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all things else shall be added unto you."

The communion of saints did not spring from their agreement with one another, but their union of heart about God. Taught by His spirit the virtue and value of the Lord Jesus for them, they rolled themselves in the confidence of love upon His care. That they enjoyed His presence was manifest, in that " great grace was upon them all." In beholding the love of God, they became vessels for transmitting it. " Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord they were changed!" " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." He bestows His gifts on those who love Himself. There is positive declension in the soul, when the gifts are spoken more about than the Given-when saints can be grieved for the lack of right deportment to themselves from their brethren, yet indifferent as to right thoughts about God in Christ. Dishonor to the Lord is less thought about than disrespect to one another. But so it is under every trial: man has proved himself untrue to God; God, in His covenant with Christ, true to man. " He abideth faithful." Blessed that it is so! Most blessed! because He changes not, we have confidence and hope. We must cease from man. We must trust in God.

The subject before us so graphically portrayed, is not novel in its occurrence. A saint to day and a prophet then, have features in common. Seeing the one, you recognize the other. The servant of God subduing every outward opposition, and himself subdued by that which was within.

Very weak ones have got the victory over the world outside the church, have overcome its threats, and despised its rewards. Very strong ones have fallen from troubles within. Ostensible evil is easily resisted; when, disguised as good, it subdues. Hence the need of constant dependence upon God, and right thoughts about Him, that He may give us the spirit of dependance upon Him. There was a bond between Job and God, as related in chap. 42, ver. 8. " Ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job." Job had his failings and many

of them. But Job had right thoughts of God. We have our failings and many of them, so that no less a Christ than the Christ of God can meet our need. Let us beware of dishonoring Him, and of that which is as bad, if not worse, assuming a neutral attitude. Judging the wrong ways of many who are contending for the right, instead of identifying ourselves with those on the Lord's side.

The sin of Jeroboam provoked the judgment of God, and in the chapter before us is given the prophet's denunciation against the altar. The course of the prophet to the close of the tenth verse, is marked by steadfastness in the service of his master. He set out on his errand by the word of the Lord. He delivers his message. The king is provoked to wrath, and commands the prophet to be seized. " He put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold of him, and his hand which he put forth against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him." The word of the Lord is adhered to, and His strength goes along with it. He identifies Himself with His testimony. The king, smitten, becomes a suppliant. He who stretched out his hand against God cannot draw it back again. And he entreats of the prophet to pray for hill'. What instruction is here

The servant, whilst witnessing for God, is supported by Him; and the power of the world is humbled at his feet. And so it should be with the church. Not because she is the called of God, but for His sake who called her Alas, she has used the grace God has bestowed, for her own exaltation, forgetful of His glory. "And the man of God besought the Lord, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before." And the king said unto the man of God, " Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward." And the man of God said unto the king, " If thou wilt give me half thine house I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place. For so it was charged me, by the word of the Lord, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou earnest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel."

Thus far the word of the Lord is obeyed-the testimony against the altar delivered. Outward opposition was overcome, and the gifts of the ungodly king rejected. The prophet was not afraid of his threats, and was proof against his rewards. His separateness as God's witness against ungodliness was maintained. Yet, " let not him that putteth on his armor boast as he that taketh it off."

Many trials await us in the wilderness. We cannot raise so much as our helmet (Eph. 6:17), but we are open to the darts of the foe. The sense of danger should keep us on the alert. It was " whilst men slept that the enemy sowed tares." That which is most apparent, is the least dangerous. The history of the Church elucidates this. Open opposition to God's people drove them to Him for protection. " When Peter saw the wind was boisterous, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!"

The greatest danger to the Lord's people is from one another. Paul, speaking to the elders of the Church of Ephesus, warns them that grievous wolves should enter in among them-" Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." "Looking diligently, lest any man fall from the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Such portions of the Word healthily digested in the soul, would work wonders in the way of keeping down self-sufficiency amongst saints. None ever wandered so far from the truth, but any of us may go further; none ever dishonored God by sin, however hateful, but we may do worse. We cannot depend upon one another. We cannot confide in one another; and the communion of saints did not consist in leaning upon one another; but each individual trusted in God, and, according to His faith, was in a position to assist his neighbor. If brotherly love could be sustained apart from God, then in just such proportion could we do without God. But "of Him, and to Him, and through Him, are all things." He gives the blessing, and His is the power to sustain it. In honoring Him, we are taught to honor one another. When His glory is our aim, our happiness is His. Exalted conception of the majesty and dignity of the Lord Jesus... and God the father delights to shower down blessing on His people. His happiness is in them, and they find their happiness in Him. Let us beware of unhallowed thoughts of the Son of God. Let us eschew curious disquisition about His person. His name is Wonderful; no man can unravel the mystery. He is presented to us as the object of adoration, not as a subject for inspection. "He smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the Lord."

But again to our narrative. We read in verses 11 to 19, " Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. And their father said unto them, What way went he? for his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah. And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon, and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that earnest from Judah? and he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou earnest. He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water." Paul, writing to the Galatians in chap. 1:8, says, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The prophet of Judah had delivered his testimony upon the express revelation of God to himself, and it was not said to him " Go to such a person, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." We have a standard in the written Word, and the Spirit of God also to enable us to apprehend it. A revelation discordant with it could not be accredited. The New Testament unfolding the purpose of grace in the Gospel, was but the fulfillment of the promises recorded in the Old.

The prophet of Bethel might have much to recommend him to notice. His years would add weight to his words. He came as a brother, and put in his claim to be so regarded because of his brotherhood. The temptation was strong, and succeeds. We shall do well to take heed in our days. A man, in the grace of God, may understand and clearly put forth the grace of the Gospel. A man, in the strength of the Lord, may manifest much of the savor of Christ in his life. God may put honor upon him, and he may deserve to be honored; but God allows no man to usurp His place.

Those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, " and the man in labors more abundant," are alike debtors to grace. What hast thou, that thou didst not receive? Who maketh thee to differ from another? Eminent gifts for the edification of the body, or shining faith for the example of the body, give no pre-eminence over it. God gave them for the service of the Church, and their service is real only as it leads the soul to rely on God. The servant should serve for the Lord's sake, and the body be grateful for the Lord's sake. The servant should wait on the body, because it is the Lord's; and the body should cherish the servant, for the Master's sake. And when this is the principle of service, it carries over every difficulty, even as with Paul, " The less he was loved the more he loved." They were dear to the Lord, though unfaithful to him; and the single eye as to whose they were, strengthened his purpose in ministry. How full of instruction is the life and career of Paul! How true to his Master; and, therefore, how true to His members! How dear to him the honor of Jesus; and, therefore, the welfare of His Church! He

would not have them regard him, but Christ in him, and follow him only as he followed Christ. How this shines forth in his parting scene with the elders at Ephesus! He "commends them to God, and the word of His grace."

Fatal delusion, if the servant of Christ allows the maintenance of his own credit and character to occupy the place of the Lord's glory and honor! Sad folly, if' his own wounded feelings distress him more than the

Lord being wounded afresh in the house of his friends"! Our own happiness is secured just so far as the Lord's glory is our aim. Faithfulness to Him secures devoted love to His people. God in Christ must be the spring of every right action for Him. Diversity of judgment in minor matters will not disturb the peace of a community, where conscience towards God is respected. Whilst praying that we may see eye to eye, we can give God thanks that the eye is directed to Him. The commandment, " This is my beloved Son, hear him! " effectually closes the door to any one less than Him. True teaching sets Christ before the taught. The subject matter conveyed will occupy the heart more than the person who imparts instruction. The object is to bring the soul into obedience to God. The instrument can never take His place, so John in his Epistle writes, " Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God."

The prophet of Judah failed in this. "I am a prophet as well as thou art," said the old Prophet of Bethel. God, who gave the calling to both, is displaced. Their character and standing is before them, responsibility to God forgotten. No uncommon occurrence in another light in our day. Brethren in Christ may dispute about their relative qualifications, whilst God, the Giver of them, is little thought of. And this is Satan's object. We can be jealous for fruits, and not care about the tree, until the blossom is nipped and blighting winter comes over the soul. Added to this, disobedience to God brings down His judgments. And these things are written for our admonition. The manner of the punishment, also, is characteristic of the offense. If man's word is regarded before God, then by man shall the sentence of condemnation be inflicted. If saints care more for their own credit with brethren, then obedience to God in His word, and prefer quiet at the sacrifice of a good conscience, they may yet learn, as did the Prophet of Judah, that the very parties for whom they have made shipwreck of faith, will be instruments, in God's hands for their chastisement.

" And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the Lord came unto the Prophet that brought him back: And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord: Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but tamest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place of the which the Lord did say-to thee, Eat no bread and drink no water; thy carcass shall not come into the sepulcher of thy fathers."

And so it fell out unto him. And in verses 23, 24, 25, we have the judgment recorded.

The Prophet was sent to Jeroboam because the latter had disobeyed the Lord and departed from Him. Now the servant falls himself into the sin of hearkening to man and neglecting God. As was before remarked, he triumphed over the opposition of the world without, and is seduced into unfaithfulness by a brother within. Communion with God is the basis of fellowship with one another. Love to God, from the knowledge of His love to us, produces love to one another. The thoughts of God concerning His people, communicated by His Spirit, form affection towards them. But He is the source of it (Psa. 87:7): " All my springs are in Thee."

Thus John, writing to Gaius, addresses him "whom I love in the truth." Harmony and peace flow from Him. They have no existence apart from Him. Hence, statements of truth propounded for our reception, must be weighed in the sanctuary before Him. No instrumentality, however eminent, releases the saint from responsibility to God. If God, by His Spirit through the Word, sets seal to the communication that it is true, we honor the instrument because God has so used him.

To accredit the vessel for transmitting the truth, without inquiring of God as to its being truth, is to honor the creature in the place of the Creator, and set man in the place of God. Thus the Prophet of Judah falls a victim to his folly. It may be he was weary with his work, for he was " found sitting under an oak." It may be the weakness of his flesh sorely tried him. The Apostle warns against such a condition in Heb. 12:2, when exhorting believers to consider Jesus, "Lest ye be weary and faint in your minds." Again, "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not."

It is manifestly possible for such lassitude, from continued trial, to overpower the believer, that he becomes an easy prey to the devices of the enemy; forgetting that " God giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa. 40:29).

Rest was presented to the eye of the Prophet, and his heart already longed for it. The bait is gilded over by a brother's reputation; he takes it, and falls. Sad consequences for him, yet full of instruction to us.

It surely was a time of general apostasy and grievous departure from God, when the circumstances detailed in our narrative occurred. Yet, so much the more culpable was the disobedience of the Prophet of Judah. Just as in our day to acknowledge the ruined condition of the Church, involves responsibility to God, not incurred by those who do not recognize it. In the days of the Prophet Micah, how lamentable the evil by which he was surrounded, how dark the picture: yet how blessed the conclusion to which he was brought! " He could not trust in a friend, or put confidence in a guide." " Therefore (he says) I will look unto the Lord: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." And so in Mal. 3:16: "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it."

The Prophet of Bethel, who thus led his brother astray, he too has his hour of sorrow. Perhaps he was jealous of the testimony God had confided to the Prophet of Judah, as also of the honor put upon him in the work the Lord had done by him that day in Bethel. Be this as it might, there was a spark in his heart, which needed but the enemy to fan into a flame, and he became a fit instrument for his brother's destruction. Not that he foresaw the consequences, though he was the tool to bring them about. Nor did his sin in tempting, excuse the other in yielding to the temptation. His soul, out of communion with God, devised a lie to deceive, and the soul of the other, out of communion, was easily betrayed. Sad was the fate of the victim, and sorrowful the lamentation of the old Prophet of Bethel (verses 26, 27, 28, 29). " And the old Prophet came to the city to mourn and to bury him. And he laid his carcass in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother! And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulcher wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: for the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."

Sorrowful picture of human frailty and its consequences. He mourns the dead he betrayed when living, and accredits the testimony borne by his brother as according to God: seeking consolation for his grief, saying, " When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulcher wherein the man

of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones."

" The Lord give us understanding in all things " (2 Tim. 2:7).

L.

"The path narrows as we near the goal."

Every prop must fall but one.

" Thy rod and thy staff."-Jacob crossed the Jordan with it, and it is beautiful to see him close the scene in worship-"leaning on the top of his staff." May it be ours, too, so to close this earthly pilgrimage, if we are called to die, or patient hold it till the Lord Himself call us hence away-to be "forever with the Lord."-S.

Present Testimony: Volume 1, 1849, Jeroboam: a Kingdom Gained and a Kingdom Lost

THE Word of God deals in facts, not theories. Man has been put upon trial in every possible way. The result of these trials has been constant failure. " Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." The scriptures are the testimony of God as to what is in man, and His testimony to what He is in Himself. Scripture is also given for our admonition. Paul writing to the Corinthians, 1st Epistle, chap. 10, so uses the Old Testament,-drawing examples and warning from the records of the past, as also instruction and stimulus for faith to day. The actions of men, and the state of the Heart which led to them, is put prominently before us. Sometimes we glean from the actions themselves, the whereabouts of a man's thoughts; at other times the Holy Ghost more explicitly declares the condition of soul. Thus we have a "sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed." " By the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the path of the destroyer." " Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path." We need faith, not experience. The latter is imperatively given to us in Scripture-God's testimony of what was in man, brought out in given circumstances, but existing in man before its development. It is also God's testimony of what is in us. Circumstances may develop this also. But where Faith is in exercise and the scriptures accredited, we do not require to be put upon trial, or to learn by our failure the knowledge of our weakness. Faith accredits God's testimony. We have in the Bible the record of our weakness. Every failure in man related there confirms it. We have also the source of strength in dependance or faith in God. The knowledge of the former works humility and trembling, and in a healthy state of soul knits us closer to God; and, conscious of our weakness, we roll ourselves upon Him.

" His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: hut the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

Thus facts, not theories, are revealed in the word of God. Now the subject before us is pregnant with meaning. A kingdom was given to Jeroboam by the appointment and power of God, and was lost by his own efforts to retain it. The call to the kingdom was of God, and the power to sustain in it, His also. God in His gifts has calculated for circumstances. He may use them to prove whether man will confide in Him; but to be swayed in our judgment by them, is to put circumstances above God, and thus to forget that He is Almighty. Unbelief in his power and Godhead does not end in departure from Him only, but to follow another; as in the case of Israel, " Up, make us gods to go before us." So in the case of Jeroboam, " he set up calves in Dan and Bethel." But let us look to the narrative. The chapter opens with the account of Solomon's idolatry: "For it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For. Solomon went after Ashtaroth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcolm the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, etc. etc." (ver. 9.) " The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice." In ver. 14, we read, "the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom." In ver. 23, we read, " God stirred up another adversary, Rezon, the son of Eliadah," etc. And again, in ver. 26-40:-

"And Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up his hand against the king. And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father. And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph. And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: and Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: and \he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel. Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (but he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is as right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom [chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: but, I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have alight alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not forever. Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

An absolute promise of God is given to Jeroboam in the 31st verse, " I will give ten tribes to thee." The ground of God's judgment upon Solomon in the 33rd verse, viz., his idolatry, the condition of blessing to Jeroboam in the 38th verse, viz., God acknowledged in the kingdom. For God to promise and to perform is one. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?"

Rehoboam, left to the unrestrained exercise of his own will, provokes the people to rebellion. In chapter 12, verse 15, we read, " The king hearkened not unto the people, for the cause was from the Lord, that He might perform the saying which the Lord spake by Ahijah the

Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat" verses 16, 17, 18, 19. In verse 20, " It came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel." " There was none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah only."

Thus the word of the Lord was fulfilled. Jeroboam reigned over the ten tribes of Israel. They unanimously elect him. God forbids the king of Judah to fight against him, commands every man to return to his house, saying, " For this thing is from me." If Jeroboam reflected on his elevation and the manner of it, nothing could be more manifestly of God, and, because of God, the maintenance of his position secured. What cause for gratitude and thanksgiving, what ground of confidence! Yet it is exactly when in the most favorable position, when there is no excuse for unbelief, that which is in the heart of man is betrayed. Happy for us that, in Christ, " God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly."

" Then Jeroboam built Shechem in Mount Ephraim and dwelt therein; and went out from thence and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David; if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah." Now this reasoning of Jeroboam would have been consistent in a man, whose advancement had been the result of his own wisdom and strength. Forethought is eminently useful in worldly matters. What a man can attain unto, he may be deprived of; and he is justified in weighing his affairs well over. When we say "justified," we mean there is consistency in such conduct, with the avowed principles of the carnal heart. But it was otherwise with Jeroboam, he owed his kingdom to God. He was chosen of God, called of God, and set up in it by the mighty power of God, and the absolute possession of the throne secured to him, and his seed after him, so long as he walked in the fear of God.

But what manifest unbelief we have in verses 26 and 27,-" And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall this kingdom return to the house of David. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord," etc. Circumstances touching his security harass his mind. The thoughts of his heart take the place of the testimony of God by the prophet. He reasons about matters which were only intelligible to faith, and the result is blind infidelity. When he said, "Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David," he boldly impugns God's faithfulness; in fact, what was it but to say incredulously, " Doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?"

His place and his throne were from God, and the security depended upon God also. Circumstances, propitious or otherwise, had nothing to do with God's promise. The gift was absolute, conditional only as to Jeroboam's conduct when in possession. God had said, in verse 38 of the 11th chapter, "I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee." Jeroboam sees the kingdom in danger, then his life also-" They shall kill me;" his eye looking at circumstances, and his heart overwhelmed. Neglecting God, he takes counsel of others "and made two calves of gold." His ruin is accomplished by the very means he took to secure his safety. Lacking faith in God for the present, leads to the denial of his power in the past. Momentous warning! "Behold thy gods, 0 Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt; and he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin." But his iniquity does not end here. He imitates the order of worship as practiced in Judah, observing feasts and ordaining priests of the lowest of the people. And he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel, the 15th day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart. What a terrible picture is this of the baseness of man: Jeroboam disowns God's care and perverts His worship. The prophet, in the 13th chapter, denounces judgment on the altar, and that by a branch of the house of David. This works no repentance in Jeroboam. In verses 33 and 34, we have presented to us his downward career in sin and apostasy. Chapter 14 verses 1 to 16, open out the domestic judgment upon him in the death of his child (yet removed in the grace of God, "because in him there was found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam"), and closes with the awful threatenings of the dispersion of Israel for the sin of Jeroboam; " And he shall give Israel up, because of the sin of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin."

" The word of God is quick and powerful." The lapse of ages does not impair its efficacy, nor the force of circumstances obscure its adaptation. The living God by His Spirit applies it in power to the hearts of his children to-day, and when reading the records of the past, we seem but to deal with the present. They that worship God now, must worship Him in spirit and in truth-the worshippers, poor sinners in themselves, yet in Christ kings and priests unto God and His Father and our Father, because His. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Thus, believers in Jesus are called to a kingdom, as in Heb. 12:28, "Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." The position of God's people on earth must needs answer to their destinies in heaven. Fellowship with God the Father, and the Lord Jesus, sustained by the power and presence of the Holy Ghost in their midst, " a peculiar people, a chosen generation, to show forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:10).

There is no other access to God but through Jesus. No medium of intercourse but by the Holy Ghost. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, the Lord is there. His Spirit remaineth with us always. Nothing more monstrous than in the face of such direct testimony to introduce man's will into the scene; no greater delusion than human arrangements. To restrain the outbreaks of the flesh by order in the flesh, is but to restrain one sin by setting up another. And strange it is that man dare to " intrude into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." The efficacy of ordinances does not consist in themselves, but in that they are given of God. The virtue of them arises from their being His. He meets his people in his own appointed way; and faith apprehends his presence. When saints are gathered together in the name of Jesus, and in dependence upon the Holy Ghost, they are in the way of God's appointment and consequently of blessing. To the eye of the carnal reasoner, such an assembly, without ostensible bonds of union or outward guarantees for order and decorum, is held together by a rope of sand. Their work is regarded as fugitive and ephemeral. The most favorable opinion is, that it may continue for a generation, but die out with it. But such arguments surely avail nothing. It is our duty to serve God to-day. The generation to come is safe in his hands. But we find it easier to affect care for the future, than to do right in the present, and to satisfy conscience by trusting God afar off, than when he is nigh.

Now, ostensibly, the position we are called to occupy, answers to the kingdom given to Jeroboam-the title to it similar-chosen of God, and called and exhorted to have faith in Him. The danger we have to guard against answers also to the one Jeroboam fell into-looking into circumstances apart from God, and striving by our own devices to maintain our standing-we say ostensibly: for the object of God in having a people in the world was to show forth his praise "that hath called us to glory and virtue." The weakness of man and the subtlety of Satan might hinder the manifestation of this; but the gifts and calling of God being without repentance, nothing can separate us from His love in Christ. But this very security brings corresponding responsibilities. We are saved to glorify God. The knowledge of our salvation is given to us,

that whilst here we may act to His Glory, and testify to His Grace; we own doctrinally it is of Him, and by Him, and through Him are all things, yet practically we engage to do much for ourselves. We are in danger also of confining the sense of our privileges to individual blessing, instead of seeing them also in their corporate character. The safety of the individual believer, is based on God's covenant with Christ, upon which he relies: but the blessing of the saints assembled together, is equally so. Believers "are builded together for a habitation of God, through the Spirit; " " one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all." No promises are more secure for the individual believer, than those for the blessing of saints assembled together in the name of Jesus. As in the individual there are many changes, so also in the gatherings of the saints. There needs daily purging of heart, and application of the promises to the soul of the individual: there may be more difficulty, but there is equal occasion for soul-discipline in the assembly. We are not wearied so readily in looking to ourselves, we break down in the care of others; and unless our souls are fortified by the word of God and prayer, we sink from the pressure of trial, into indifference; or, wearied with combating the wills of others, determine on the unrestrained exercise of our own. But God has written confusion on man's efforts. And even men of God have wandered furthest from his thoughts, when they have sought to provide for emergencies in the church before they have appeared, or to obviate their manifestation by discipline of their own. The chaos around us in the Religious World, the very vanity and vexation of all things, are God's warnings to us, to "cease from man;" man would not trust God for His Church, and has sought to restrain disorder by bonds of his own. How utterly has this exercise of will proved abortive, and brought in confusion which nothing can remedy, the end of which is revealed to be judgment.

" Separation from evil is God's principle of unity." Such a step taken, necessarily isolates from systems around, and throws the soul upon God. The subtlety of Satan has acted upon man, to develop arrangements prohibiting blessing to the saints. The eyes of His people are opening to this, and the question is forced -upon us, Whither shall we go for aid? Blessed be God fp'. His Grace! His Spirit remaineth with us always. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, his presence is vouchsafed. Manifest blessing has resulted from restored confidence in the basis of the Church, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. Believers have been blessed, and made a blessing to others-the realized presence of God;-giving fullness of joy. The inheritance is discovered-the position taken-Almighty God pledged to sustain us in the blessing He Himself has provided. The times are at hand when the elect shall scarcely be saved. That they may be secured, God, by His Spirit, is opening their eyes to the danger; and, conscious of weakness, they are thrown necessarily upon him. Blessed necessity! The abounding evil around giving occasion for the super abounding grace of God. Let us beware that the thoughts of our heart do not take the place of the testimony of God. Appearances may be against us-circumstances daily arise to embarrass us-but they are permitted of God for the development of faith in Himself to the praise of his glory. " No weapon formed against thee shall prosper." Our manifold failures are so palpable, that our enemies already rejoice in our discomfiture, and account that the revival of truth which has blessed us was but a delusion: yet even this shall but serve to increase our dependance upon God. We have the elements of destruction in ourselves, but the energy of life in God. He identifies Himself with His people. He has raised the desire in our hearts to be identified with Him. When Pharaoh purposed the destruction of the children of Israel, God ordered them to encamp between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon. The enemy found them-God's eye was there too, and their deliverance is accomplished. So now the enemy is triumphing in our weakness, and purposing the injury of the body of Christ. But God orders us into the citadel, " the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and are safe." There is danger! let us flee unto God to hide us. Let us not lean to devices of our own, nor write in our folly the sentence of death on our position and privilege instead of upon ourselves. " For we have the sentence of Death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead." What may we not expect from his mercy?

The Body, The Church.

Jesus had shed his blood, was risen, and by the right hand of God exalted. If God had been glorified in him, He also glorified Him in Himself, and that straightway. The Son of Man ascended up where He was before. He was glorified with the Father's own self, with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

Nor was his glorification without result to others. If on earth the Son of David could not disown the higher glories of his person, but rather led on the faith of a poor woman of Canaan to that infinite source of grace beyond, which, while it brought down to a real sense of the depth of degradation and woe, abounded but the more in streams of healing mercy: if on earth, "lie could not be hid," what was the suited blessing that flowed down from the God-exalted Man, crowned with glory and honor in heaven? Were those He loved to taste no savor of His joy above? Was there to be no peculiar, no present power of fellowship with Him, and worthy of Him, who was set at God's right hand " in the heavenly places far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come.

On the contrary, it is precisely in this interval between his session on his Father's throne, and his coming to take his seat on his own throne, that the great mystery of Christ and the Church finds its place, development, and revelation. God, whose earthly purposes had been seemingly frustrated but really secured, though for a time in abeyance, uses the cross meanwhile as the basis of other and higher counsels (settled in His mind before the world was, but until now hidden in Himself), and thereupon exalts the crucified Lord of Glory, and sends down the Holy Ghost, not only as the one and Divine witness of what and where Christ was, but as the gatherer, by his own presence here below, of an assembly from among Jews and Gentiles, brought into the participation of the heavenly glory of Christ-in a word, as the formative agent of the Church, which is Christ's body, "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

Beyond just question, it is in reference to this new and heavenly assembly that scripture speaks of the closest identification with Christ, of oneness with him as his body. By such a oneness, it is not merely meant that persons here and there, few or many, had been and are objects of the love and quickening power of the Son of God. Life is not, nor does it produce this oneness; abstractedly, it finds and leaves the recipients of it individuals still. Life did not set aside for this world, for those who possessed it, the remarkable characteristic and divinely sanctioned separation of Jews from Gentiles: much less did it sever externally believing Jews from their unbelieving kinsmen according to the flesh, whatever the mutual sympathies, hopes and conferences one with another, of them that feared the Lord. If there were devout Gentiles, and there is little reason to doubt that God in his mercy raised up such (witness Cornelius), before the gospel of His grace could righteously be preached, they served Him, worshipped Him, but as Gentiles nevertheless. There was no fusion of these with the godly Jews. The faith of one might be admirable in the eyes of the blessed Lord himself-"so great faith he had not found, no, not in Israel." Still it did not hinder his remaining a Gentile. Faith in itself did not, and could not, alter that, as regards this life. It was reserved not for the gift but for the Giver of faith to work a strange, unlooked-for and total reversal of the ancient order. So as to the Jews, though they had the gifts and calling of God, if any believed, the faith of individuals wrought without doubt a moral separation, and sufferings were the consequences; and the new life has

affections as proper to it as are depraved lusts to the old life; yet were not the faithful Jews formed into a manifested holy company here below, they lived as Jews, they died as Jews. It would have been sin in them to have relinquished their prerogatives and standing as Jews. Even in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, was not abolished. It existed still-nay, had his sanction, when he forbade those commissioned in the days of his flesh to go into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into any city of the Samaritans.

Now the doctrine of the epistle to the Ephesians, chaps. 2, 3, is that consequent upon the cross, an entirely novel and different work of God commenced: a work which, belonging to, and awaiting its perfect display in the heavenly places, has an actual existence on earth, and most momentous effects in this present time. The point is not Christ dying for the Jewish nation, nor God thereby reconciling all things to himself. It is not His death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, nor for the blessing of any Gentiles who may be saved during His future reign; none of which things perhaps would be questioned by a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven. But the doctrine there enforced is that God founded upon the cross and accomplished by the Holy Ghost thereon given, a platform and structure wholly without parallel in the millennial age, when the old outstanding differences will be resumed, as abundantly appears from the Psalms and Prophets. Ephesians, chap. 2:11-18 thus contrasts it with their previously existing relations, the one dispensationally nigh, and the other afar off.

" Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

That is, in and for the Church, such fleshly distinctions are done away. Beyond a doubt, in the Church's glory accomplished on high, they will be unknown. But the Apostle goes further, and particularly insists that they are, and ought to be, unknown now. No man, not even Christ known after the flesh, is the key-note of the Church: " yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." The Church can rest on nothing short of death and resurrection. She rejoices in her head glorified in heaven, and knows herself even now one with him there. Consequently she is raised alike above the high estate of the Jew, as above the low estate of the Gentile. " For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." If the mass of those gathered into the Church were dark, outcast Gentiles: if they could not say, We are " Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever"-they received a better adoption and a more surpassing glory; not merely covenants connected with earthly things and presented by a Messiah (whatever His own personal dignity), as minister of the circumcision, for the truth of God to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, but the unsearchable riches of Christ freely given, which it was meet for the God of grace and glory to bestow upon the far-off penury and wretchedness of those who possessed nothing!

This was "the mystery" which was specially entrusted to the Apostle Paul, made known unto him by revelation, " as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel." In previous ages the Spirit had quickened souls: there was nothing strange in that. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said the Son of God, not yet lifted up. The extraordinary thing was, that, when the Jews perverted their singular endowments to sin and insult the most aggravated against God, not aiding only, but provoking and inciting the Gentiles to, the crucifixion of their own Messiah, occasion was taken of the breach thus of necessity made between God and a guilty world, to introduce a secret hitherto undisclosed, but now unveiled. The elect nation had consummated their corruption and violence. God's name was blasphemed among the heathen through those who were separated to be the grand depositary of His oracles and the witness of His character on earth. What remained, if thus the earth and its choicest people were in rebellion? HEAVEN; and so, in the depths of divine compassion, and wisdom, and love, God began to assemble a body neither Jewish nor gentile properly, though chosen out of either, both made one, both reconciled in one body, destined for a sphere as alien from the most exalted as from the most debased of earth.

" God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us," say the Jewish saints in Psa. 67, " that thy way may be made known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." Such is the order of blessing in the world to come: the Jews in the inner circle, and in the outer the Gentiles through them glad and singing for joy, for God governs in righteousness. The blessing of the nations was an ancient and reiterated truth; proclaimed to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), renewed to the seed (22:18), repeated to Isaac (26:4), and to Jacob (28:14). It was bound up in terms with the promises so well known and cherished, which guaranteed the highest seat on earth to the seed of Abraham. Is a most certain and familiar pledge of Gentile blessing in the promised seed-is this, so often and not obscurely referred to in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, the mystery which has been " hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the saints"? Can that with propriety be said specially and absolutely to be hid, which was among the simplest and most frequently recurring household-words of the people of God, from the time of the first promise to the patriarchs? There is no secret nor silence about that which was published from are to age, and declared from generation to generation. What was made known to the fathers, and indeed to all Israel, cannot be, for this very reason, the mystery of Christ—that peculiar mystery, " which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit."

Some, I am aware, through unbelief and a consequent lack of spiritual intelligence and heed to human tradition, have unwittingly sought to neutralize the specialty, and thereby the nature and being of " the mystery," by the assumption that it had been revealed from the beginning, and that it was always, though dimly, understood by the Old Testament saints. The answer is plain and direct: the Apostle Paul says positively that "it is now revealed." From the beginning of the world it was hid in God (Eph. 3:9). To the apostles and prophets it was now revealed, and to none previously- . Certainly it is not to the apostles at the present and to the prophets at a former time. It is now revealed, and that to persons joined together as a common class to which the revelation was then made;-as the structure of the words necessarily implies to any competent to judge of such a question, shutting out, therefore, the idea of any prophets being referred to before the Pentecostal mission of the Spirit. The prophets alluded to in the text, were of the present economy as much as the apostles were; and therefore the words, far from

weakening, tend directly to strengthen the distinctive character of " the mystery," as a thing wholly unrevealed in former times.

The character, also, of the Abrahamic blessing of the Gentiles, is totally different from that of " the mystery." "In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," etc. (Gen. 22). All the nations are to be blessed in the seed; but they are, and are here regarded as being, distinct from it. They are no more to be confounded with the seed, so as to form one common body, than are the enemies whose gate is to be the possession of the seed. It and the nations are assuredly to inherit a blessing. But if it be the same blessing, will. any one maintain that it is after the same mode or in the same measure? If it be so-if the seed and all the nations of the earth are blessed indiscriminately and alike, where is the marked and characteristic prerogative of the seed of Abraham? Or is there, in truth, no peculiar privilege for his seed after all? If, on the other hand, it be not so, and the seed is to have its own proper promised place by divine favor, higher than all the nations who are blessed in it, then is the oath to Abraham most clearly distinguished from " the mystery " wherein no such differences exist, but the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and joint-partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.

Let it be repeated, that Eph. 2;3 do not teach the permanent and illimited setting aside of Jewish exaltation above the Gentile. To such a superiority in this world the Jews had a lawful title, until Christ, rejected, ascended into heaven; and such a superiority will be theirs when He returns again. But there is the abolition of everything of the sort for that which spans the interim; in other words, for the intermediate calling of the church; because the church is not a mere aggregate of units-of believing persons throughout all ages, but a special body gathered, by virtue of the Holy Ghost actually present and dwelling in them as a temple, for association with the heavenly glory of Christ, as the redeemed Jews in the millennium will be the nearest and most favored objects of his earthly rule.

It was, then, the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, descended from heaven, which was the power of the unity established here below in the church; a unity not merely of life-of doctrine-of services, but of the Spirit; the unity formed and perpetuated by the Holy Ghost Himself (Eph. 4:3). The disciples, like saints before them, were believers before Pentecost; but they were then, and not before, united to Christ in heavenly places as His body. That which unites to Christ, constituting us members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, is not the faith which the Spirit communicates as He has ever done, but the Spirit Himself personally given, as was the case at Pentecost.

Observe, it is not " unity of spirit." That is the theme pressed upon the Philippians (1:27): " Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;" and compare chap. 3:16. Nor has the apostle forgotten elsewhere to pray for the saints at Rome, that the God of patience and consolation would grant them to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, that they might with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace as this is, the exhortation in Eph. 4 is of a higher order. It is not so much the spirit of themselves, or of one another that they were to think of, but the Spirit of God, the unity of the Spirit. Moreover, the apostle does not tell them to form a society by community of object, agreement of opinion, or likeness of manners. Certainly it was not an optional alliance which they were called upon to frame. The Spirit of God makes the unity. Their business is, "endeavoring to keep it (or, observe,) in the bond of peace." How humbling to man and exalting to God: how encouraging, wholesome, and strengthening to His saints! To one who has entered, howsoever little, into the divine estimate of what the church is, and will be, in the counsels of God, or even of what the church originally was when, gazing into the heavenly face of Him who loved her, she reflected by the Spirit somewhat of the light of God's glory which she had seen there; to the heart of such a one, grieving over the wreck of the deposit that was committed to the frail and treacherous hands of man, and humbled at his puny and ineffectual and proud efforts to repair the ruin which he can no longer disguise-to such, I say, O what a relief to know and feel that even here in the desert it is not "my flock," nor "our church," but the church of God, the body of Christ, the unity of the Spirit! These are the living realities with which we have to do; and at all cost to repudiate in ourselves, or in others, corporately and individually, all that denies them. That single-eyed unflinching allegiance to the wideness of God's heart about His people must, in a time of general departure from Him, lead into an isolated path, I do not doubt, however paradoxical it may seem. That it may appear to be a severe exclusive narrowness to those who are not weaned from the worldliness and unbelief of essays on a grand scale, is possible; but for the faithful there is no choice. "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."

None of course would deny that, as men, as sinners, as Jews and Gentiles, there are certain things possessed in common with others. There is a unity of mankind, as such or fallen, as under law and without law. There is a continuity in the administration of the promises, dispensationally, on earth, according to which Rom. 11 views, first, the Jews as the natural branches of the olive-tree; then, some of them broken off because of unbelief, and the Gentiles, or wild olive-tree, graffed among them; and afterward, upon the Gentiles not continuing in the goodness of God, the Jews graffed again into their own olive-tree. Again, there is a unity which dates higher up than the olive-tree of earthly witness-that of all the faithful, who, in the acknowledgment of common sin, look to a common Savior, as there will be a blessed and holy communion of such as have part in the first resurrection. But all these unities are demonstrably distinct from "the unity of the Spirit." With the redeemed, it is true, the Spirit had to do, inasmuch as He it is who had given souls to believe God's salvation in Christ. That, therefore, was not, whereas the unity of the Spirit is, a new thing; for never before had He come to abide in redeemed sinners, and thus to make them one with Christ glorified on high and one with each other here below. Satan had his union of Jews and Gentiles in the cross of the Son of God; and in that cross the foundation was laid for God's union, effected by the presence and indwelling of the Spirit in those who enjoy the exceeding riches of the grace of Gad in his kindness towards them through Christ Jesus. "There is one body and one Spirit."

Another remark, connecting itself with the foregoing, needs to be made. Those who form the Church, whatever may be their distinctive endowments, share many blessings with all saints who ever have been and ever may be. Election, redemption, faith, saintship and heirship in the kingdom are doubtless our privileges, but they are not the exclusive property of the Church. They are common to all believers. So true is this, that they may be traced in the spared and blessed Gentiles, in the striking scene described in Matt. 25:31-46. There the Son of man is supposed to be already come and seated upon the throne of his glory, and he separates, among all the Gentiles ( ) gathered before him, the sheep from the goats. The gospel of the kingdom had been preached, it may be observed, for a witness to all those Gentiles ( ) before the end came; and the ground of the sentence is laid in the reception or rejection of those whom Jesus, as the. King, (for his royal rights are now enforced, displayed and acknowledged), designates as his brethren, a class evidently distinct from, though coming in contact with the sheep and goats. To the sheep, set at his right hand, the King says, " Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." That these are believing saints, redeemed by the blood of Christ, none perhaps would dispute; and the passage affirms that the kingdom which they inherit was prepared for them from the foundation of the world: terms, which differ indeed from those in Eph. 1 (which show how the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in him before the foundation of the world) but sufficiently

decisive of the fact that God prepared a special inheritance for these living Gentiles, whatever might be the small amount of their spiritual intelligence.

But if there are blessings common to all believers of every age, the Holy Ghost, on the other hand, could not personally come down, and abide in men on earth, according to the scriptural figure springing up in them as well as flowing out, until Jesus was glorified in heaven. But when he took his seat there as the exalted head, the Holy Ghost was sent down for the purpose of gathering a body for Christ. This and this only is called in Scripture "the Church of God," and its unity hinging upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost, is, as we have seen " the unity of the Spirit." Matt. 16:18, is the first occurrence of the word " Church " i.e. assembly, in the New Testament. It is important to observe that there it is spoken of as a thing not merely unmanifested, and unordered, but as not yet existing. It- was not built, nor building yet: " upon this rock I will build my Church." Secondly, the promise that the gates of Fades shall not prevail against it, cannot allude to the indefectibility, much less to the infallibility of the Church on earth. Thirdly, Christ's Church is mentioned as altogether distinct from the kingdom of heaven, the keys of which (not of his Church) the Lord promises to give to Peter.

The unity of the Church as Christ's body will surely be displayed perfectly in the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. But does not this Scripture teach, that the Church, if for the time on earth, to itself as the heavenly witness of the grace of God, will then form part of a common system? I answer, that the passage seems, on the contrary, to keep distinct the Church in her own peculiar and pre-eminent seat of the affection and glory of Christ. For, first, the apostle speaks of the heavenly things and the earthly things being headed up in Christ, which is deduced in Colossians 1:15,16, from His claims as Creator, though asserted by Him as the firstborn of every creature; in which latter text we have affirmed his supremacy by right of creation over all things that are in heaven and that are in earth. Next, it is added,-" In whom [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ: in whom ye also," etc. Just so, after the statement of His headship over all things, the Epistle to the Colossians turns to another headship,-" And He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Neither heavenly things nor earthly things are the Church, though they may be the inheritance of her who is co-heir with Christ. God " hath put all things under His feet, and given him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body." Instead of being included in " all things under His feet," she enjoys and participates in His supremacy over all, in virtue of being one with Him. Sealed with the holy Spirit of promise, she looks for an inheritance such as becomes Him who has purchased it, and Him who is its earnest; such as becomes, may we not add, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, " to whom be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

But although it is in " the dispensation of the fullness of times" that the glory of Christ, shared by the Church as His bride, will be revealed, so that the world itself shall know it, yet was there a testimony to it, produced and manifested by the power of the Holy Ghost in the one body on earth. When the apostle spoke of the saints being "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," was this unity a thing ideal, future, and only to be achieved in heaven? Or was it not an actual, present fact, made good here below by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven? Is it not true that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God? " And the unity of the Spirit, which the saints should endeavor to keep, where was it if not on earth? Will the saints in heaven be endeavoring to keep it there? And the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers given of Christ, Himself ascended up far above all heavens,-where were they, and where still are the gifts of Christ? Where and to what end is exercised the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ? Does the perfecting () of the saints, does the work of the ministry, does the edifying of the body of Christ find their sphere in heaven? Is it there that we are in danger of being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine? Or is it on earth that we meet with " sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive "? and there that we "grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body into the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4)? It was here, in the Church, that each joint of supply wrought, contributing nourishment to the whsle: it was here, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, that the body made increase. It is in this world, and in this world only, that " all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment administered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God," as it is assuredly here that the Spirit would have the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, to the which also we are called in one body (Col. 2, 3).

In writing to the saints at Rome (ch. 12), hitherto never seen by the apostle, and therefore in man's judgment at least, connected in no peculiar way with him, as was the case with regard to the Colossians, it is just the same: " As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Evidently, it is not a tie which was going to be established, but a relationship then and really existent. Membership is not with a local church, but with the body of Christ; though, on the other hand, if one be not in fellowship with the assembly of the members of Christ where one resides, there can be for such no fellowship with them anywhere else.

Nor can language be more explicit than that of 1 Cor. 12,-" But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." The composition of that one body depends upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By Him are baptized into the body of Christ, Jews, Gentiles, bond or free; it matters not. The great fact is, that Jesus exercises His heavenly rights. He baptizes with the Holy Ghost; and they who are thus baptized become the immediate and the especial field of His presence and operations, the body of Christ,-the body subsisting on earth, and acted on by the Spirit when the apostle wrote. The diversities of gifts, of administrations and of operations, will not be in heaven. Their province is the Church on earth. It is here that the manifestation is given to every man (i.e., in the Church) to profit withal. If any reasonable doubt could be harbored about the word of wisdom to one, the word of knowledge to another, and faith to a third, there can be no question in the believer's mind, that the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, divers kinds of tongues, and their interpretation, are not prospectively for heaven, but for earth now. It is the one and self-same Spirit who energized all these, distributing to each. For the many members constitute but one body-" by one spirit are we all baptized into one body." The importance of these last words will be better estimated, on comparing with them Acts 1:4,5; and particularly the clause, " Ye shalt be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." At the time the disciples were believers. They had life, and life more abundantly, we may say. Jesus, the quickening Spirit, had breathed upon them, and said, " Receive ye the Holy Ghost," etc. He had also opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. But none of these things is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost first beheld the accomplishment of the promise of the Father.

Then, and not before, were believers baptized with the Spirit. But it is this baptism which introduces into, and forms, the one body-it is the Spirit, thus present and baptizing, who began, organizes, and recruits the body of Christ. Hence is it, that coincident with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we first hear, in the Word of God, of this new body, and of membership therein. Whatever the privileges (and there were many) which existed before, that which is distinctively called in the Bible the church of God, appeared here below, as the consequence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, dwelling in the disciples, and baptizing them, Jews or Gentiles, into one body.

" But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." 1 Cor. 12:18-27.

When the members are together in heaven-when our vile body is changed, fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself, will any " seem to be more feeble?" Shall we think any to be" less honorable" there, and "upon these bestow more abundant honor?" That this is a present care flowing out of the sense God gives us of the exigencies and of the preciousness of Christ's body here below, is exactly what I am contending for. Does any one believe that such will be our employment when Christ presents us to himself a. glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But if not, these members are members of the body then on earth, for God hath tempered the body together, " having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body (in heaven there is no danger of schism); but that the members should have the same care one for another." "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it," clearly not in heaven, but on earth. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular:" where and when is this?

"And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps in governments, diversities of tongues." Manifestly, these are gifts in the Church, the whole Church on earth. The apostle addresses, no doubt, the Church of God that was at Corinth; and it is very clear that the New Testament frequently speaks of assemblies in this or that locality: that is, Churches (compare Rom. 15:1, 5; Gal. 1:2, 22; Col. 4:15, 16; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14, etc. But, besides this, which is not disputed, as well as the application of the term in Heb. 12:23, to the congregation of the firstborn which are written in heaven, viewed as a completed thing, however anticipative Faith might say, " Ye are come" to it, even as to the other components of the glory; besides, in short, the local and future senses, 1 Cor. 12:28 is an instance of another sense of the most important bearing, as may be seen in the Epistles of Paul; the Church, as a body here below, in a breadth as extensive as the baptism of the Spirit. That entire society, or corporation, wherein He dwelt and wrought, was the Church in which God set apostles, prophets, teachers, etc. Certainly it was impossible to say that He had set all these in the Corinthian assembly, nor will it be maintained that He is to set them in the Church universal gathered on high. There is, then, a third and large sense of "the Church," in which unity is predicated of all the members of Christ existing at one time in the world, whatever might be the distance separating their bodies; and that in virtue of one Spirit baptizing them into one body. The body of Christ, like the natural, is susceptible of increase, as Scripture plainly indicates; but, as in the natural body, the identity subsists when the old particles have given place to new, so the body of Christ is the body still, whatever the changes in the members in particular. He who, by His presence, imparted unity at its beginning, conserves unity by His own faithful presence. He was given to abide with the disciples forever.

In fine, by " the Church " is meant not a junction of various co-ordinate, much less conflicting societies, but a body, the one body of Christ, possessing the same privileges, and calling and responsibility on earth, and looking for the same glory in heaven as the Bride of Christ. If a man was baptized by the Spirit, he was thereby constituted a member of the Church; if he had a gift, it was to be exercised according to the proportion of faith for the good of the whole; not ministry, not membership pertaining to a Church, but to the Church; each joint belonging to the entire body, and the entire body to each joint (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 3, 12, 14; Eph. 1-4; Col. 2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 22:17).

Women of Scripture, Women of Scripture: Queen of Sheba

1 Kings 10:1-13

The report of the fame and wisdom of Solomon, the third king of Israel travels far away to the province of Sheba in southern Arabia and reaches the ears of its queen. Only a report, but it arrives at an opportune moment and sets the queen's heart and feet in motion. Although a lady of such high rank, her brow is often furrowed by puzzling over the difficulties, the perplexities and the unsolved problems that face her on all sides. Here is an opportunity to have solved many of her "hard questions," and she embraces it. With a present of gold, precious stones and costly spices, a worthy offering in her estimation for so great a personage, she and her attendants make the journey. In her eagerness to reach Solomon and prove his wisdom for herself, the long desert journey with all its discomforts presents no hindrance to her.

At last the anticipated moment arrives, and she finds herself in the presence of the one whose fame had reached her in that far-off land. To him she unburdens her difficulties, communing with him of all that is in her heart. Is Solomon equal to the occasion? Is there any tangle he could not unravel, or one knotty question he could not solve? Does his wisdom fail him when put to such a test? Let Scripture answer: "And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not." 2 Chron. 9:2.

Everything around speaks of his greatness and wisdom. Even the apparel and bearing of his servants and attendants manifests his glory, and she is not blind to all this. In fact, it has such an overwhelming effect upon her that, although a queen, she sinks into insignificance in the presence of such a revelation of glory, and "There was no more spirit in her." She owns in humbleness that it was a true report that she had heard-not overstated or too highly colored, as most reports are. Still, she does not really believe it until, being in his very presence, it was made real to her vision. She comes, she sees, and her heart is conquered. No wonder she exclaims, "Behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard."

How eloquently Scripture speaks! Cannot we see something deeper in this beautiful, divinely drawn picture than appears on the surface? Primarily, no doubt, it depicts the coming wonderful day of Christ's display when "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth," when the monarchs of Sheba shall offer gifts and the gold of Sheba shall be given Him, and when all nations shall serve Him and call Him blessed (Psalm 72:8, 10, 11, 15, 17). However, we can also give it a more present and personal application. Can we not trace something in our history that corresponds? Have we not, like the Queen of Sheba, heard a very distinct report of the One who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and perhaps, like her, at first we do not fully believe it, or we underrate its significance? Have we not burdens and difficulties that no earthly friend can resolve? If so, may the divinely-given "report" set our hearts in motion toward the true Solomon, and may we allow no obstacle to keep us from coming into personal touch with Him. He could say when on earth, referring to this very incident: "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here." Luke 11:31.

If the Solomon of old could satisfactorily answer all her questions and solve all her difficulties, rest assured that the "greater than Solomon" is perfectly able, and more, is longing to set every heart at rest which is unburdened in His presence. There self-esteem and pride have no place, but the Lord Himself and His glory fill the vision of the soul, and the heart is captivated and conquered. As we thus begin to learn His inestimable worth, the language of our hearts will be, "Thou exceedest the fame" that we heard. This must always be the result of coming to the Lord Jesus Christ and having personal dealings with Him.

One thing more, Solomon was not content that she should witness his wealth and greatness; she must participate in the blessings of it too, and so he gave her-

"Whatsoever she asked." Wonderfully gracious, but the gift is limited to her consciousness of need!

"All her desire." Now he goes beyond her requests merely, and satisfies her heart's unuttered longings. Even this does not content him, and so he gives her

(3) "Of his royal bounty." He does not now consider her capacity to receive, but his own resources from which he draws. Wonderful picture of the attitude of the heart of Christ to all who come to Him in need!

Should we not desire to learn more of the unlimited supply and unfailing character of His royal bounty who loves to give "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" Eph. 3:20?

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