

JOHN IV.

"With Thee is the Fountain of Life."

Who is that weary Man, so lone and pale,
Beneath the shade that falls on Jacob's well ?
A lowly pilgrim, from the noon-tide heat,
He sitteth there to rest His tired feet.
No more He seems : but heavenly hosts attend
And wait on Him, where'er His footsteps bend.
They looked with wonder when they sang His birth,
The greatest marvel ever seen on earth.
That humble Man is Israel's promised King,
Though for His head a crown of thorns they'll bring.
Yes, He Immanuel is, The Eternal Word,
Of heaven and earth, of men and angels, Lord,
The Eternal Son hung on a woman's breast,
The mighty God * beside the well takes rest.
... My soul tread softly ! for 't is holy ground,
No finite mind can this deep mystery sound,
But worship and adore the wondrous love
That could the blessed God so freely move
Towards thee, a sinner, and an enemy !
Yes, Lord, Thou hast revealed this grace to *me*.
But see—a woman comes, unconscious, who
Sits by the water, and as careless too.
He asks to drink, and coldly she replies,
Yet gazes on the stranger with surprise,
For there was something in His eye and tone,
That ever marked Him as the Holy One.
Ah ! didst thou dream, poor sinner, that for thee,
Thus faint and weary, He's content to be,
That for the joy of giving thee to know
The living fountains from His heart that flow,
The garden's agony, the Cross, the grave,
He'll suffer all, His guilty ones to save.

But thou *didst* know, the grovelling heart was won,
And found a treasure, ere the setting sun,
Thy happiest hour, thou could'st rejoicing tell,
That hour of noon, which brought thee to the well,
Alone with *Jesus*,—from His lips to hear
What drew the publicans and sinners near,
The gracious words for which our spirits yearn.
O blessed Lord ! we too would sit and learn,
And drink abundantly, yea, drink for ever,
Pleasures of pure delight from God's own river !

* Isaiah xl. 28.

JESUS CHRIST COME IN THE FLESH.

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

This was the business of the camp. There was to be subjection to the will of Him who dwelt in the cloud; dependence on Him who led them daily; conscious liberty because of having left Egypt behind them, and hope because of having Canaan before them. Such a mind as this was to be in the camp; but its business was to conduct the mystic house of God onward to its rest, "the possession of the Gentiles." (Acts vii. 45.)

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

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

away from the promised Canaan. (Amos v. 25, Acts vii. 43.)

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

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

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

Title to entrance is confession to that doctrine, a confession of "Jesus Christ come in the flesh," a confession that involves or secures the glory of His person. A full confession to His work only will not do. The one outside may profess a sound faith as to the atonement, sovereignty of grace, and like truths; but all this is not a warrant for letting him in. There must be confession as to His person also. "Whosoever transgresseth, and

abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed ('and give him no greeting.' R. V.): for he that biddeth him God speed ('that giveth him greeting.' R. V.) is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 9, 10, 11.

Surely this is clear and decided. I believe this is much to be considered. The truth touching Christ's person is to be maintained by us, even though our soul's safety were not involved in it. I grant that our salvation is involved. But that is not all. He who owns not that truth is to be kept outside. It imparts tenderness as well as strength to see that the name of JESUS (The One of whom the ark was a type) is thus entrusted to the guardianship of the saints. This is what we owe Him if not ourselves. The wall of partition is to be raised by the saints between them and Christ's dishonour.

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

Now, in John's Epistles, the name "Jesus Christ" expresses or intimates, I believe, the deity of the Son. The Holy Ghost or the Unction, so filled the mind of that apostle with the truth, that "the Word" which had been "made flesh" was God, that though he speaks of Him by a name which formally expresses the Son in manhood or in office, with John that is no matter. The name is nothing—at least, nothing that can interfere with the full power of prevailing assurance, that He is "that which was from the beginning," the Son in the glory of the Godhead. This is seen and felt at the very opening of the First Epistle, and so, I believe, throughout. (See chap. i. 3, 7; ii. 1; iii. 23; iv. 2; v. 20; 2 John 3-7.)

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

The confession, therefore, which is demanded by them is this—that it was God who was manifested, or who came in the flesh. (See 1 John iv. 2; 2 John 7.) For in these epistles, as we have now seen, "Jesus Christ" is God. His name as God is Jesus Christ. And it is assumed or concluded that "the true God" is not known, if He who was in the flesh, Jesus Christ, be not understood

as such ; and all this simply because He is God. Any other received as such is an idol. (1 John v. 20, 21.) The soul that abides not in this doctrine "has not God," but he who abides in it "has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

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

The very adjunct (as another has written to me), "come in the flesh," throws strongly forward the deity of Christ ; because if He were a man, or anything short of what He is, it would be no such wonder that he should come in the flesh. And verses 2 and 3 of chapter i., guide us to John's thoughts in the use of the name "Jesus Christ." That which was from the beginning, the eternal Life which was with the Father, was the Person he declared to them. The words "with the Father" are important, making it evident that the Son was the eternal One, the name of this eternal Son being Jesus Christ. And it is interesting to compare the close with the commencement of this Epistle—"This is the true God and *the* eternal life."

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

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

1. As the born One—holy, meeting God's mind in the nature or human material.
2. As the circumcised One—perfect under the law, meeting God's mind in it.
3. As the baptized One—meeting God's mind in dispensational order and righteousness.
4. As the anointed One—meeting God's mind as His image or representative.
5. As the obedient One—doing always those things that pleased the Father.
6. As the devoted One—meeting God's mind in all things; and in laying down His life. (John x. 17, 18.)
7. As the risen One—sealed with God's approval in victory for sinners.

Thus does He meet all the mind of God while providing for us. All was magnified in Him and by Him, all made honourable. God's proposed delight in man, or glory by him, has been richly answered in the blessed JESUS. While in His person He was "God manifest in the flesh," in the succession of His stages through the earth He was accomplishing all the divine purpose, delight and glory, in man. Nothing unworthy of God was in the man Christ Jesus, His person, experiences or ways.



A perfectly humble man would be one who was always thinking of the *Lord Jesus*, and never of *himself*.

MARK IX. 49, 50.

“For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.”

The Lord here lets us know that all should be tested by the perfect holiness of God, and that in judgment by one means or another. Every one should be salted with fire—the good and the bad. Where there was life, the fire would only consume the flesh; for when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. If the judgment reaches the wicked (and assuredly it shall reach them), it is condemnation—a fire that is not quenched. But, for the good, there was also something else: they should be salted with salt. Those who were consecrated to God, whose life was an offering to Him, should not lack the power of holy grace, which binds the soul to God and inwardly preserves it from evil. Salt is not the gentleness that pleases (which grace produces without doubt), but that energy of God within us which connects everything in us with God, and dedicates the heart to Him, binding it to Him in the sense of obligation and of desire, rejecting all in oneself that is contrary to Him (obligation that flows from grace, but which acts all the more powerfully on that account). Thus, practically, it was

distinctive grace, the energy of holiness, which separates from all evil ; but by setting apart for God. Salt was good : here the effect produced in the soul, the condition of the soul, is so called, as well as the grace that produces this condition. Thus they who offered themselves to God were set apart for Him ; they were the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith can it be salted ? It is used for seasoning other things ; but if the salt needs it for itself, there is nothing left that can salt *it*. So would it be with Christians ; if they who were of Christ did not render this testimony, where should anything be found, apart from Christians, to render it to them and produce it in them ? Now this sense of obligation to God which separates from evil, this judgment of all evil in the heart, must be in oneself. It is not a question of judging others, but of placing oneself before God, thus becoming the salt, having it in oneself. With regard to others, one must seek peace ; and real separation from all evil is that which enables us to walk in peace together.

In a word, Christians were to keep themselves separate from evil, and near to God in themselves ; and to walk with God in peace among one another.

No instruction could be more plain, more important, more valuable. It judges, it directs, the whole Christian life in a few words.

AFFLICTION'S LESSONS.

A LETTER FROM A FRIEND ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

MY DEAR SISTER :—I thank you and dear M— much for having thought of sending me the account of the accident to your dear babe. It is indeed a sore trial to see one who is a part of ourselves thus taken off at one blow, and unexpectedly. Still, what a difference, to have the Lord's love to look to, and to believe one's babe—as I surely do—the object of it. It is a consolation which changes everything, because everything is changed. The knowledge of the love of God, which is come into this place of death, has brightened with the most blessed rays all its darkness ; and the darkness even only serves to show what a comfort it is to have such light. There is nothing in the heart but light ; nothing can make darkness when we have it. It is a world of sorrow ; and the longer we know it, and the nearer even we walk to the Lord, the better we shall know it to be such. I do not mean that none of our sorrows are chastenings : we know that they often are such to His most beloved ones, as we see in Job. By all, save Christ, there is all grace to be learned by them ; and even He entered into the sorrows of others, as arising from their faults and foolishness ; for His sympathies were perfect, and, blessed be God, they are.

He suffered for righteousness, and He suffered

for sin ; but, besides this, He entered, as taking by grace a place among the godly remnant in Israel, into all which that remnant would feel as seeing the state of Israel (of which they were actually part) under the chastening hand of God for sin. All this He felt as none else could feel. His sympathy is as perfect now, though no longer passing through the sorrows by which He gained the experience of it. Besides, it is only in the part which has to be broken and corrected that we suffer ; a touched affection, when Christ is with us in the grief, is of infinite sweetness, though the sweetness of sorrow. It is only when the will mixes itself up with the sorrow that there is any bitterness in it, or a pain in which Christ is not. But then this is all useful, and what we need. The Lord takes your dear babe to heaven (certainly he has no loss); what is the rest of God's dealings in it with us—with one's heart? He who has made a mother's feelings knows what they are—knows what He has wounded, and knows why—has a purpose of love in it. There is a mass of things in the sincerest of us, of which we are not aware, which are not brought into subjection to God, which work and shew themselves unsuspected. God breaks in upon us ; how many things He shews—how many cords He cuts at one blow ! A whole system of affections is touched : we feel that death has its place and part in them. I never saw a family the same thing after the first death that it was before. There

was a breach in the circle. What belonged to the whole body of affections and life of this world was touched, was found to be—mortal; it was struck in its very nature. The course of life went on; the wave had closed over that which had been cast into it; but death, and the affections which belong to this world, had been found to meet. But all this is well; for death is come in. Besides, we live in these things; our will lives in them; and when the will is broken, so far as it is so, it is broken for everything. We learn more to lean on what never breaks—not to lose our affections, but to have them more in connection with Christ, less with this will of our own nature; for nature must now die as well as sin. But then Christ never makes a breach, except to come in and connect the soul and heart more with Himself; and it is worth all the sorrow that ever was, and more, to learn the least atom more of His love and of Himself; and there is nothing like that, nothing like Him; and it lasts.

But, besides, there is a useful work by it in our own hearts; and so more capacity to know, and enjoy, and learn communion with, Him; more capacity to delight in and understand God; to know, and to know the value of, what He delights in; more moral capacity to delight in what is excellent. We little know what high and blessed things we are called to. Oh, that the saints knew it better! to be with, and have common joy and communion with, God!

Some have much of it down here. It is opened out to them. But all that is of nature and will can have no part in this; and often the saints, though not directly dishonouring the Lord, are living in nature. Then the Lord deals with them, "turns man from his purpose, and hides pride from man." (Job xxxiii. 17.)

Oh, what a profitable thing it is to have that hidden from us! And how completely it is when God deals with us, and brings us into His presence, whatever means He may employ, for He knows the springs of our hearts and how to touch them. But oh what grace is this daily, constant care!—"He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." (Job xxxvi. 7.) What a God we have to do with! And all in love! And when the storm is all passed, the brightness for which He is preparing us will shine out unclouded, and it will be Himself—Him we have known in all this tender care. Yet in the brightness of His glory, the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be its light. (Rev. xxi. 23.) We shall be with the Son, with Jesus, enjoying as and with Him the brightness and divine favour which shine out on Him. And oh, how blessed the love, Jesus' love, that has brought us there forever with Him, in virtue of it, and now in the full blessed enjoyment of it with Himself!

I do earnestly pray that this sorrow may be blessed to you and to all your dear children, that they may see how near death is, but the Lord still nearer. Assure dear M— how truly I sympa-

thize with him. A father's sorrow, though of another character, is not less deep than a mother's. You must expect that, as time passes on, the present feeling of loss will diminish, and, in a certain sense, pass away, too. Not that the affectionate remembrance of your dear little babe will be at all gone, but its character will be changed ; and your living children and daily occupations will make it less absorbing. This is natural, and, in one sense, right. Living duties have their place, which cannot be rightly yielded to absorbing affections. What I would earnestly recommend to you is to profit by the moments when the impression and present effect of it is strong ; to place yourself before God, and reap all the fruit of His dispensations and tender grace. It is a time when He searches, and manifests His love to, the heart at the same time. May you grow much by this—surely to a mother's heart—painful occurrence.

Ever faithfully yours in Christ, —————



To be indifferent to the presence of evil in the Church, is to be guilty of high treason against God ; it is taking advantage of His love to deny His holiness, despising and dishonouring Him before all. God acts in love in the Church ; but He acts with holiness and for the maintenance of holiness : otherwise it would not be the love of God which acted ; it would not be seeking the prosperity of souls.

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

(Continued from page 40.)

What characterizes declension?

(Ch. I 17-36.)

We have seen signs of declension in the verses which we have been considering, while the state of the people was still good. Now we shall see in what declension, properly speaking, consists. It is not the same as ruin, which is declension fully matured, such as we find in Ch. ii. Both reappear in the history of the Church, and in proof of this we have but to read the epistles to the seven churches. (Rev. ii, iii.) Declension in Ephesus leaving her first love,—ruin in Laodicea, whom the Lord is obliged to spew out of His mouth.

What, then, is declension? In a word, we may say, *worldliness*. The heart, principles and walk are in unison with the world. This is invariably how declension begins, and we may well understand the "Take good heed to yourselves" in Josh. xxiii. 11. How easily this snare might be avoided, if the hearts of God's children were upright before Him. But instead of dispossessing the Canaanites, Israel is afraid of them, tolerates them, and dwells with them. So, also, the Church, looked at as a whole, is allied with the world. Later on we shall see the disastrous results of this alliance. Suffice it for the present that God's

Word establishes the fact, that Israel did not keep separate from the Canaanitish nations.

Another principle comes out in this passage : declension is *gradual*. Step by step Israel's course is downward, until the solemn moment when the angel of the Lord definitively quits Gilgal for Bochim. This is true both of the Church (Rev. ii, iii), and the individual. A Christian who has walked in the power of the Holy Spirit, if he allows the world even a little room in his heart, instead of treating it as an enemy, will by degrees get under its thralldom, and will perhaps close his career in the sore humiliation of a defeat.

Chapters xix-xxi of our book are a narrative of events which historically precede Chap. i. We shall consider them more particularly by-and-bye, but I mention it here to bring out a third principle apparently contradictory to the second—namely, that, *from the first*, before God had delivered them over to their enemies, the people, as to their moral state, were *totally lost*. It was the same with the Church. Scarcely had the last apostle passed off the scene, when a tremendous gap was visible between the principles of the primitive church and those of the times immediately following. Christians suddenly lost even the elementary views of salvation by grace, the work of the cross, justification by faith.*

These two principles, gradual declension and

* See, on this subject, a valuable tract, "Christianity, not Christendom," by J. N. D. (To be found in his Collected Writings, vol. 18.)

sudden downfall, are of immense practical importance for us, setting us on our guard against the least worldly tendency, on the one hand ; and, on the other, teaching us not to put any confidence in the flesh, but to depend solely on God and His grace.

Let us now consider in detail, the portion of scripture before us. "And Judah went with Simeon, his brother, and they slew the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath, and utterly destroyed it. And the name of the city was called Hormah," which signifies "utter destruction." This is a remarkable fact, and recalls the book of Joshua. Judah refused all link with the Canaanite. The strong cities of the Philistines were conquered—"and the Lord was with Judah." But why did he only possess the mountain, and not drive out the inhabitants of the valley? Alas! he feared their "chariots of iron."

Mistrusting, to all appearance, his own strength, Judah had, nevertheless, allied himself with Simeon, and this was, as we have seen, in measure to mistrust God. To tremble before the power of the world is a consequence of not confiding in the power of God. Had they not on a former occasion of victory burned Jabin's chariots with fire? (Joshua xi. 4-9.) Had not God promised the house of Joseph that "they should drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and though they be strong"? (Joshua xvii. 17, 18.) What then were iron chariots to Jehovah? When

our confidence in Him and in His promises is shaken, we say like the spies sent by Moses to view the land: "And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak . . . and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." (Numbers xiii. 33.)

How different to Caleb! (v. 20.) He expelled the enemy, even the three sons of Anak, from his inheritance. In days of declension, individual faith can act, where collectively it is impossible. In v. 21, "the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem." Judah, in days of prosperity (v. 8), had smitten this city with the edge of the sword, and set it on fire. But the forces of the vanquished enemy are skilful in reforming, and never consider themselves beaten. Israel's low estate gave them a favourable opportunity, and so "the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day."

The history of the house of Joseph (v. 22-26) recalls that of Rahab in Joshua ii, with this main difference, the *work of faith* is absent. The act of the man of Luz, delivering up his city to the children of Israel, is that of a traitor, not that of a believer. Joseph decoys him by a promise of his life, and instead of, like Rahab, associating himself with God's people after his deliverance, he returns to the world and rebuilds in the country of the Hittites, the very Luz which Jehovah had destroyed.

Many, alas ! were the cities which Manassah did not dispossess (v. 27, 28). Observe the word : "The Canaanites *would* dwell in that land." The world has more power over a Christian in a low state than the Word and promises of God. It is true that "when Israel was strong, they put the Canaanites to tribute ;" but that was ruling, not driving out. Christendom, grown rich and powerful, did the same with regard to paganism. It may have been permitted by God in His providential ways, that it should be so, but it was not faith.

Ephraim and Zebulon allowed the Canaanites to dwell *among them* (v. 29, 30). Henceforth, the world formed part of the people of God. Asher and Naphthali (v. 31-33) went a step farther : they *dwelt among the Canaanites*. Israel is engulfed by them.

One more trait, and the picture is complete. "And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain ; for *they would not suffer them* to come down to the valley" (v. 34). The world, at length, obtains what is sought, and spoils the children of God of their inheritance. Satan's aim always is to rob us of those things which constitute our joy and strength ; and he succeeds only too well.

Do not let us forget how gradual declension is.

Ere long, we shall see poor Israel abandoning the God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, bowing down to false gods, and, as a consequence of their idolatry, oppressed and plundered by their enemies.

Beloved brethren, we *all* belong to a period of declension. It is too late for the Church, collectively, to return ; but let us, at least, individually, avoid this slippery path. Let us watch against the world, and mistrust even its fairest baits, seeking, in these closing days, to be amongst the faithful ones to whom the Lord can say, "I will come in to *him*, and will sup with *him*, and *he* with Me." (Rev. iii. 20.) God grant that holy separation from the world, and increasing communion with the Lord, may characterize us until the close of our course.

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



FRAGMENT.—Worldiness and earthly-mindedness have blinded the minds and hardened the hearts of Christians, now-a-days, to an extent very few have any idea of. There are, I am persuaded, very few cases touching upon the safety, and well-being, of the Church of God, which can be left to be judged by the mass of believers. On whom can one cast one's burden of responsibility as to the spirituality of the saint's walk and conduct? In cases innumerable which have occurred, I have found that the affections to the person of Christ have not been lively enough to make Christians indignant at open insults put upon Him—and they have had neither the heart nor the mind to stand apart from that which was the expression of indifference to Him.