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New Series.—No. 6.

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HELPS BY THE WAY:

A FORTNIGHTLY MAGAZINE,

Designed for the ministry of a full and precious Christ, to those for whom
He died.

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“Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which en-
dureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for
Him hath God the Father sealed.”—JOHN VI. 27.

CONTENTS:

	PAGE
THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW	141
THE FRUITLESS BRANCH AND ABIDING IN CHRIST....	149
“PLANTED BY THE WATERS.”	155
OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.....	160
GLEANINGS	148, 154, 167
ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS	168

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With the end of the present year the first volume of the new series of HELPS BY THE WAY, will have reached its close. Very cheering has been the encouragement received as to it already, the signs of the Lord's blessing having been abundantly given. It is purposed therefore, if He tarry and permit, to continue as we have begun through the coming year. The Key-Notes to the Books of the Bible will be regularly continued, and it is hoped be helpful to accurate and intelligent reading of the Word; and it is intended to commence a series of papers, also on the varied features of the prospect before us, the exceeding great and precious promises, which are to be fulfilled to us at, and beyond the Coming of the Lord. To these the two articles on 'Our Hope' and 'The Nearness of our Hope,' in the present volume may be considered introductory.

It is proposed, also, to issue, if the Lord will, a Monthly Supplement, devoted to subjects connected with the wide-spread and increasing scepticism of the day. This, it is believed, will meet a decided want, and enable Christians to minister directly to a need more and more appealing to us, as put in trust with that precious Word, which is as sufficient to meet it in one form, as in another. The colleges and schools are by their acceptance of current scientific views, educating a generation of sceptics, and it is with the hope of reaching many of these, that especially the present undertaking is set on foot. Brethren in the Lord are earnestly invited to help in this new field of labour, with their prayers, and personal exertions.

F. W. GRANT, Editor
No. 7 Sultan St.

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THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

2. THE KINGDOM ANNOUNCED, CH. III-VII.

(1). The third chapter gives us the proclamation and anointing, not of a Son of David merely, but of the Son of God. We see at once that only as this can He take the kingdom, a kingdom which is to be God's. The blessing of it is this, that man, over whom, astray from God, many lords have had dominion, returns to Him to whom alone he owes subjection. So now it is Jehovah's way that is to be prepared; and, at His baptism, it is His beloved Son whom the Father owns. Satan too tests Him as this: "If Thou be the Son of God."

The proclamation of the kingdom of heaven necessarily involves the call to repentance. If Jehovah it is that comes, how otherwise could they prepare His way? The baptism of repentance is in Jordan, that is, 'baptism unto death.' Those coming to it take that solemn place, confessing the sins which have brought them there. They must not say they are Abraham's children; for the axe is at the root of the trees.

Then the Lord comes to take His place in death for those He finds there, not as One whose due it is, but to 'fulfil righteousness.' It is His pledging to that more solemn baptism of which He speaks afterwards. And He who could give an argument to the Father's love in thus laying down His life (Jno. x. 17), is thereupon owned by the Father as His Son, the object of His delight, the Spirit as a dove anointing Him for His work. The bird of heaven, the bird of love and sorrow, in whose silver wings of redemption

is the sheen of the gold, the display of divine glory, is His lovely and fitting type.

(2). Thus proclaimed and anointed, He is deliberately exposed to the tempter, led up of the Spirit, not of His own will; the second Man, blessed contrast to the first, tempted in a wilderness, not in a garden, fasting to meet the devil, not as others to meet God. His forty days' exposure, not fed with manna but ahungered, reveals Him perfect in the knowledge, which in forty years of lessons Israel had failed to learn. He answers Satan out of Deuteronomy, in which the moral of their wanderings is declared, taking ever the place of man in dependence, out of which the devil would use the truth of His Divine glory to seduce Him.

The flesh, in Him sinless, is the first point of attack. Here the tempter finds in One come to do God's will, no motive in the hunger of a forty days' fast to provoke a will to satisfy it. Man lives by the word of God, not bread: so He in dependent willlessness.

The second temptation is as Messiah, to whom the promise quoted confessedly belonged. But the devil mutilates it, for the blessed word of God could not in honest usage be a means of temptation. He would lead the Lord aside from "His ways," to prove, if He could, that God was for Him. But if Israel had thus tried God, He, perfect in faith, could not so tempt Him.

Finally, and at once, all the kingdoms of the world are set before Him, by the sudden dazzle to throw Him if possible off His guard, if but for a moment, and seduce His heart from its allegiance to God. But here Satan has disclosed himself, and, being disclosed, is defeated. He departs; and angels come and minister to the Conqueror.

(3). And now the light shines out in Galilee. The King Himself proclaims the kingdom, gathers His heralds, and displays the "powers of the world to

come :”* the power by which evil shall be banished from the world under Messiah’s sway. Thus manifesting His title to the kingdom, in the presence of the multitude He instructs His disciples in the characteristics of it. This is the “sermon on the mount ;” and the kingdom itself, we must remember, is that of which the prophets prophesied, the kingdom in which Jerusalem shall be, more gloriously than ever, “the city of the great King,” and “times of refreshing shall come from the *presence* of the Lord,” not (as now) the kingdom in the time of His *absence*. Yet, *in principle*, the Lord’s words apply to us often only with *more* force on that account, as we may easily see, if we apprehend the difference of dispensation.

The Lord begins with describing the character and blessedness of the heirs of the kingdom, a character formed by the hope of what yet they see not (v. 3-6), and by the more specific divine lineaments, which are found in all God’s children (7-9). Persecuted for *righteousness*’ sake, they are yet the salt of the earth, and for *Christ’s* sake, they are its light; they are to let that light (their testimony to Him) shine before men, that their good works, seen in that light, may glorify their Father (10-16).

Next, the law is mentioned in its integrity, not a jot or tittle removed. It is to be written on Israel’s heart according to the terms of the new covenant (Jer. xxxi. 33). The Lord applies it to the thoughts and intents of the hearts, completes it by the repeal of what had been allowed hitherto for the hardness of them, and adds to it the manifestation of a love even to enemies, by which they are to show themselves the true children of their Father (17-48).

Three special characters follow, of a righteousness which is to be before God, not men : alms (which is mercy, *manward*) ; prayer (the evidence of dependence,

*Heb. vi. 5 : the word ‘powers’ is one used commonly in the plural for ‘miracles ;’ and the “world to come” is the regular phrase for Messiah’s kingdom.

God-ward); and fasting, (mortification, *self*-ward) vi. 1-18. Then, treasures are to be laid up in heaven, the eye single, the heart without carefulness, in the knowledge of the Father's care (19-34); without censoriousness (vii. 1-5), as on the other hand without loose abandonment of spiritual things to those in capable of valuing them (6). Two things close this part: the assurance of the Father's help ever available (7-11), and the 'royal law,' summing up the law and prophets, as far as concerns conduct towards men (12).

The last part is a warning with regard to giving practical heed to the Speaker's words, though the road they led might be narrow and untrodden, and false prophets deceiving souls. The time of trial would come which would test every man's foundation, and he only that built upon His words would abide the storm (13-27).

3. THE REJECTION OF THE KING.—Ch. viii. xii.

(1.) The character of His kingdom being thus announced, the next two chapters give at full length the signs which shew the presence of the Deliverer and King. Here again at the outset, in two typical cases, is exhibited His rejection by His people Israel and His reception by the Gentiles.

The leper, one of Israel, but whose place was forfeited by his condition, is the significant representative of the former. The Lord heals him by *touch*, as one locally present for man's need, sending the healed man to the priest to certify the cure, and as a testimony to them. There is no result from this; but then we have a Gentile, the centurion, whose faith, going beyond any in Israel, accredits Him with power to heal, not merely present but *absent*, by His word. This is characteristically the faith of the

present dispensation, and the Lord announces thereupon the nations coming and sitting down in the kingdom with the heirs of promise, while the children of the kingdom should be cast out.

We now find Him healing at Peter's house,—fulfilling Israel's prophecy with a sympathy manifesting itself in power for all that came. Yet He Himself has not where to lay His head. None the less is His claim upon His disciples to follow Him absolutely.

And now He displays fully the extent of His authority: on the Sea of Galilee, over the powers of nature; the winds and the sea obey Him, but the disciples marvel, through unbelief. Next Satan's power is met with the same ease and foiled; man's terrible captor is compelled to give up his prey: alas, the people more alarmed at His presence than at the devil's, ask Him to depart, and He departs. Thirdly, He reaches down to the deepest need of all, the sin which subjected man to evil and the evil one; and He works a miracle to give them sensible proof that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins: but here it is in answer to the accusation, "This man blasphemeth." Thus the more He manifests Himself, and in blessing, the more decided is His rejection on the part of men. But it only compels Him as it were to greater grace: He calls the publican, and sits down in his house with publicans and sinners. He comes to call these, not as the law which required righteousness: the new wine of His grace is to be put in other than the old legal 'bottles.'

Again, most beautifully, a dispensational picture follows here. Israel is in fact dead, as is Jairus' daughter. For her too therefore, he has to go beyond the law, which could not give *life*; but then upon that principle faith is welcome freely to use for its need the power in Him; again the principle which brings in Gentiles, and that before (in fact) Israel is raised.

Having vindicated thus His title as Son of God

(for resurrection marks Him out as this, Rom. i. 4, with power for man), He can now appear as Son of David: for this title, as we have seen, is based upon the other. Yet as really rejected, the blind men are forbidden to spread His fame as such. The dumb man, finally, who speaks when the devil is cast out, seems a picture, once more, of what caused the nation's silence, where they should have hailed their King. But the Pharisees consummate their wickedness by imputing to Beelzebub His miracles of power.

(2.) The second subdivision begins with ix. 35. The Lord's pity for the scattered sheep makes Him send forth messengers throughout Israel. The testimony is distinctly to them, not to Samaria or the Gentiles, and "powers of the world to come" still attest the coming kingdom. It is a testimony which, while in abeyance during the present dispersion of Israel, will be taken up again after the Church is removed to heaven, and not completed until the Son of man be come again (x. 23). This final testimony will be above all in the face of trials and persecutions of the severest kind; but the Lord is with His messengers, to reward or punish those who in them receive or reject Himself:—a principle applied to the Gentiles in ch. xxv. 31-49.

(3) Ch. xi. is the direct witness of His own grace, in spite of opposition and rejection. Even the Baptist seems to waver, while the people in general have rejected both John's testimony, coming in the way of righteousness, and the Lord's in grace. Wisdom's children have been only publicans and sinners; and the cities, privileged to behold His mighty works, have only used the opportunity to increase their judgment beyond that of Canaan or of Sodom.

Yet His heart rests. It is good that from the wise and prudent should be hidden what the Father reveals to babes. And all things are delivered into His hands, who is Son of the Father, and in turn reveals the Father. His hearts rests, and He gives rest. In

obedience to Him and learning of Him who is meek and lowly of heart, is true rest found. His yoke is easy and His burden light.

(4.) In the 12th chapter that generation's guilt is summed up, and their doom pronounced. The Lord shews them that the Sabbath, the sign of God's covenant existing with them as His people, is gone for those, who had broken the covenant, and lost the place of relationship with God. David's rejection made common the most holy things; and then again in the temple the sabbath was not observed. The Son of man, greater than David or the temple, was Lord of the sabbath day. But also God used the break-up of the legal covenant to shew and require mercy.

The convicted Pharisees seek to destroy him. Again the blind and dumb, made so by Satan's tenancy, bears witness to the Son of David, and again the Pharisees utter their awful blasphemy. The Lord exposes their folly and warns them of the danger of blaspheming the Holy Ghost. The bad fruit showed the whole tree bad, even the idle words for which men would give account in the day of judgment.

Finally, when they seek a sign, He tells them the sign of Jonah alone should be their sign. Jonah, after three days and nights in the whale's belly, had appeared at Nineveh with the word of judgment. The Son of man, rejected and three days in the grave, would in His day be a similar sign of judgment to His rejectors (comp. ch. xxiv. 30). The external reformation which had taken place on their return from Babylon, when the unclean spirit (of idolatry) had left his house, would not avail; the house was empty still, and he would return with seven other spirits worse than himself, and take possession (comp. ch. xxiv. 15, and 2 Thess. ii. 4).

He closes with the solemn breaking of all fleshly ties. It was he who should do the will of His Father in heaven, whom alone He could now recognize as in

relation to Himself. This is a principle of Christianity, and prepares the way for that view of the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven,—the kingdom during the rejection and absence of the King, which the next section of the book discloses to us.

The presenting the blood is one thing, the appropriation of it by the sinner is another. The moment I can say to Him who died, "Thou hast washed me in thy blood," I have appropriated it by faith; but if I say, "I want to be the servant of Christ, as well as being washed in His blood," I shall give the proof of being set apart by the blood to live only unto Him.

No human mind could say, "The Lord Jesus is in heaven and I am in Him." Men of the world would laugh at you for saying it. Yet it is a fact, and the believer can say it, is so, because it is revealed in the Word, and he has tasted it in his own soul.

There is a routine of things and duties connected with earth, which sometimes catches hold of us and draws us down; even necessary care for relations may go to occupy the mind, so as to hinder the outflow of a heavenly walk

If my heart knows Christ, Christ is the answer to everything. I begin and go on with Christ, matchless in His beauty; and He goes on with me. I desire to be His, and nothing but His.

Is the peace of God in the soul disturbed by things down here? No, never! If waters break in stormy currents against a rock, the rock is unmoved; it is only the waters that are disturbed.

Never take a penknife, because you think statements in the Word are too large, to cut them down to your own tiny measure.

The peace of one who is hid in the cleft of the Rock nothing can disturb.

THE FRUITLESS BRANCH AND ABIDING IN CHRIST.

The fifteenth chapter of John may be called the chief chapter of exhortation in that gospel. It speaks of fruit-bearing, and of the responsibility of the disciple of Christ, and hence calls for fruit from every one who professes to be such. Israel was the vine of old, but Christ is the true vine, the source of all fruit-bearing. Israel was the people to whom God looked for fruit of old; now He looks for it, from those who confess the name of His Son. Any man who says he abides in Him, his responsibility is according to his profession, he ought to walk even as He walked.

This responsibility according to our profession is set forth in many places in scripture, "Ye are the salt of the earth," even though the salt lose its savor and be worse than nothing. "Ye are the light of the world," and again, "a city that is set on an hill can not be hid." Striking figures, the two latter especially, of the marked effect of the testimony of all who are called God's people. "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you," had to be written of some false to this responsibility. And so to the Corinthians "ye are the Epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." These passages speak of testimony before men, and John xv. of fruitfulness to God; but in all, there is recognized the same wide-spread responsibility, attaching to all who are called God's people in the world, calling for a walk according to God's word, and sometimes announcing rejection by God and judgment from Him for failure.

Men look for fruit for their labor from the whole

of the field or garden cultivated, not from a part only, and so God's claim is upon all who have enjoyed the gospel, and especially upon those confessing His name. All professing then to follow Christ, are as branches in the vine.

This passage therefore is to be classed with the many solemn passages of this character in the New Testament, which shew the existence of two classes among the professed people of God, the fruitful and the fruitless, those whose walk answers to their profession, and those who at the end are found wanting. Of such a kind is the parable of the Sower, in Matt. xiii. where one class of hearers only bears fruit, and these are the ones who receive the seed into good ground, that is, into an understanding heart. *All* such bear fruit, and none besides; so also in the parable of the pounds, and in that of the talents; the one who meets judgment at the end, is the one who has made no use of his pound, or his talent; has not even put his Lord's money into the Bank, that his Lord might receive his own with usury. And so very notably, in the sixth of Hebrews, the one who falls away from all the privileges of the gospel, is compared to the ground that bears thorns and briers, after all the labor that can be bestowed on it, and which "is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned;" like the withered branches of the fifteenth of John, which men gather, and cast into the fire, and they are burned. It is important too to notice that those passages do not set forth the case of one bearing some fruit at first, and afterwards becoming fruitless, which is what we are apt to think, especially as to the sixth of Hebrews, and the fifteenth of John, but of bearing no fruit, absolutely none from first to last, in His sight who can see all things. Thus in the passage before us, the branch that is taken away, "beareth not fruit." In such a case there is no life, no life from God. One verse in James makes this plain, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Of course in such

a chapter there is not that which gives peace to the anxious. It is rather as the law of Mount Sinai to such and gives the knowledge of sin. But those who have peace with God, are stirred to watchfulness and perseverance in the life of faith.

As to the word, "every branch *in me* that beareth not fruit," it is not *in Christ*, in the sense of Rom. viii, or Ephes. ii, by the Holy Spirit. That subject is not introduced in this chapter. We must read the passage in its connection. The Lord was using the figure of a vine and its branches, a figure of things going on on earth, of outward profession of discipleship. All professing to follow Christ are in the relationship of those addressed in this chapter, they are branches in the vine. But the one who abides not in Christ, in whom there is not living reality, real dependence on Christ, is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather these, and cast them into the fire and they are burned, as the tree that *bears not fruit* is hewn down and cast into the fire, which we know is condemnation and judgment.

But there is such a thing as reality, as abiding in Christ. Abide in Me, and I in you. And mark the difference between what is said of the world and what is true of the follower of Christ. The whole world *lieth* in the wicked one. The believer *abides* in Christ. In the believer there is life, there is the energy of God through faith, in the midst of deadness all around. It is remarkable that after the exhortation "abide in me," which is for us to do, there is added that which is linked with the exhortation, "and I in you," which is not of our doing. It follows as a sure consequence nevertheless. When we abide in Him His life is active in us, He Himself is in us, in sensible communion, somewhat as in the 3rd of Revelation, "if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me." We can not bring Christ into our hearts, but we can abide in Him, and with that is found, "and

I in you," two things that go together. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." How thorough and constant a dependence, how intimate a communion, is our appointed portion! We can do all things through Him, without Him we can do nothing. This is our joy, though so easy to forget, so often forgotten; we need discipline to learn dependence. If we get through the day, without dependence there is not fruit bearing. We walk by faith, and not by sight.

Under law there was the seeking to bear fruit, as in the flesh, as of ourselves. Now it is abiding in another, in Christ; and therefore altogether a living in the exercise of faith. It is what Paul was carrying out when he said, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Self occupation is not faith, from the very fact that I am thinking of myself. Self is the object, though it be only a trouble to me, and so whether I feel myself to be in bondage, or on the other hand, if I am deceived into self complacency, I am not in either case, in those things walking by faith, but rather by faith, by feelings. By faith I have Christ for my object, for my dependence; not my feelings good or bad. And now the blessings He gives, we may rest in, and lose dependence and communion, and that exercise of conscience which flows from, or goes only with, a real dependence on Christ throughout the day. "The God of hope fills us with all joy and peace IN BELIEVING" in the exercise of faith. To walk by sight is the constant temptation—to walk by faith, is overcome by the power of God.

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Here it is not "and I in you," but "and my words abide in you," "ye shall ask what ye will &c." That is, there is obedience and intelligence in the mind of Christ, through His words abiding in the

heart, and so prevailing in prayer. If His words are abiding in us, our asking what we will will be asking what He wills, and if we ask anything according to His will, we know that He hears us. It is possible then to know the mind and will of God, and to pray the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, which availeth much. But for this we must be followers of Christ, who pleased not Himself. The heart's confidence must be in God, and His word for all things. There was but One who could say, 'I know that thou hearest me always,' but we are to remember the example of Elias, who was a man subject to like passions with ourselves. Effectual prayer goes with an uncondemning heart and confidence towards God.

"Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." He speaks of *His* Father, the One He had made known to them, and whose will He came to do. The disciples were the fruit of His work, and in bearing much fruit by the grace of Christ, the Father was glorified. And now that Christ is absent, the results of His Cross, are seen in the world in His followers to the glory of the Father. Those who thus bear fruit are His disciples in reality. And the word, herein is my Father glorified, appeals to the heart, and may we not say it, brings the heart into divine fellowship—into fellowship with the work of the Father and the Son. Not that our place of fellowship, our relationship as sons, is here spoken of. They are disciples and servants, but yet called friends, spoken to as friends. It is from such a standpoint, that we can see the wonderful grace of the Lord, that He should so speak to us, and invite and count upon our heart's interest in His work to the Father's glory, as bearing fruit in us, and all this in close connection with the end of ch. xiii., "the cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." We may trust such a Lord. It is all grace. The poor erring sheep were soon to forsake Him and flee, but the Lord in and of His own love communicates to them, and establishes and builds

them up in the truth. He knows their hearts but He is the shepherd of the sheep, and "having loved His own He loved them to the end."

And then He tells them of His love, bringing them into the circle of Divine affection. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you," a wonderful comparison for our hearts to dwell upon, "continue ye in my love." As we are to abide in Him, so we are to abide in His love, the soul's repose in life's journey. In keeping His commandments we abide in His love. We do those things that please Him, and in this path of obedience alone, have we the joy of His love in the heart, as Jesus Himself kept His Father's commandments and abode in His love, which shews the wonderful and blessed reality of His pathway of dependence and obedience, though He were a Son. As we read in this same gospel, when wearied at Sychar's well, it was His meat to do the Father's will. So He speaks these words to us in the fifteenth chap., that His joy may remain in us, and that our joy might be full. Is not communion of the love of Christ and obedience out of a full heart full joy, the joy of Christ in us, His words, His joy, His peace, His path is our portion, and His glory.

E. S. L.

Peace may flow as a river—but the moment we are washed in the blood, God takes us up to train us for Himself. It does not interfere with our blamelessness before Him as washed ones; there is not a thought in His mind of blame, but because I am so connected with Christ, He sees all the little ways in me that are unlike Christ.

If you do not understand what God's present claims over you are, you may depend upon it that as days of testing come on, you will not be able to keep your footing.

G. V. W.

“PLANTED BY THE WATERS.”

PSALM I.

The book opens with the blessedness or happiness of the godly man in contrast with the wicked. In a less degree it is the picture of all those who tread in His footsteps, yet primarily it is the Lord Jesus, for He only could truly claim this character. Redemption setting us on new ground, in our measure we participate in what is there, and the Psalm itself furnishes important instruction as to the path of peace the godly are called to walk in through our evil world. Sanctification is separation, and therefore the character of the godly man is first put in the way of contrast to, and abstinence from, that which characterized the wicked (or lawless). He is viewed as walking, standing, sitting. The counsel of the ungodly does not influence his path, but he goes on in wisdom's ways, which are ways of pleasantness, and *all* her paths peace. But what fills men's minds who are away from God, he does not share in, the plans and schemes of the world in its abandonment of God for him have no attractions, but the reverse. Therefore its course and way he is not found standing in.

Is there not here a distinction between ungodly and sinners thus?—the ungodliness points to the state rather of their minds as at enmity with Him, and therefore their counsels He is apart from, they do not influence him. Sinners seem rather to point out the fruit of these counsels in actual things done, and the godly man is not found standing as a loiterer in these

ways. The seat of the scorner he sits not in. Here he is viewed more at rest, but not sharing in that levity of mind and stubbornness of will which rejects God's testimony. But sanctification is by truth: God has spoken, and amidst the confusion the human will, perverse and restless, has introduced, a path has thus been marked out for man. Even the blessed Lord as to this, though in Him holiness was inherent, yet took God's revealed will as His guide. "Thy law have I hid in my heart." And in answer to Satan He first quotes: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." "I seek not mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." How blessed to see that no other than the Word and Will of God, which governed the heart and ways of the obedient One, is left for us to live and walk by. God's Word implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God, and which thus believed carries with it both conviction of our sins and peace for our consciences, becomes dear to us, because of the healing it has wrought: "He sent forth His Word and healed them;" and this Word, in the distrust of ourselves and all save the God from whom it comes, which it has wrought within, becomes that in which we take pleasure. (See. Ps. cxix). So here, "but his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in His law doth He meditate day and night." There may be a stage in Christian progress in which this is little seen, such as Rom. vii; the fruits of love to that word are not found manifest there, because the soul is not in liberty, but under bondage, and therefore crippled in its attempts at holiness. But yet true to its character as born of God, the law of God is delighted in in the inner man, though outward conformity to it is not yet found. God has to teach that, taken as law, with the claims of God upon responsible man enforced by a penalty, it is fruitless to deliver and can only condemn, whilst the one born of God consents fully to its requirements which he is unable to meet.

There must be a deliverer, not alone from the guilt of sin, and its consequences, but from that which is the strength of sin—of that which it forbade. This only can be through taking it out of the region where law applies, and that is the condition known as “in the flesh.” Death then—death with Christ, is the only way of escape, and on resurrection ground in the full unclouded favour of God, there we can walk in happy liberty with Him who has thus brought us to Himself, “I through the law am dead to the law, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. Precious words of rejoicing from a delivered captive, who now loves his deliverer with a deep and strong attachment. By the Word, through the Spirit, all this is ministered to us, and we love that by which God has met our need.

Unwatchfulness of heart, however, and the getting under (in consequence) the power of other things, may take away our appetite for the “sincere milk of the Word,” and then we sink down as unsustained in heart, beneath the pressure of the world. Blessed to know that still the Faithful One keeps us, or soon we should give up all and become like the world which knows not God. The spirit of this age with its hurry and drive, too often begets in Christians a want of meditation upon the truths they read or hear, and it becomes like an undigested meal which rather oppresses and burdens than relieves and satisfies. It is good to cultivate a habit of meditation in secret with the Lord, who loves to have us sit at His blessed feet in the enjoyment of that privileged and “good part, which shall not be taken away.” For this we must learn how to put aside things often which would claim our consideration and though excuses may be made, more often it is lack of heart rather than of opportunity that stands in the way.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," is His Word, however, and obedience to it will not fail to secure blessing, and the manifestation of His loving care as to all that concerns us in our need as creatures; we shall learn that it concerns Him too

A tree planted by rivers (or rivulets, a stream divided into canals and brooklets for irrigating) of water, and receiving constant nourishment therefrom, is the figure used to convey the thought of the flourishing condition of the one who thus draws strength and vigour from the precious Word of God. Fruitful in his season, and his leaf unfading in the summer's heat, he abides a witness to the sustaining power of God, who finds delight in that which is the product of His own rich and sanctifying grace. We see this illustrated in Mary first found sitting at the feet of Jesus hearing His Word, and then at Lazarus' death not acting in the haste of Martha, who hastens off unnoticed to meet the Lord, when she betrays her incapacity to take in His words, and her ignorance of His person. "I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask (*aiteo*, beg) of God He will give it thee," (*erotao* is always used of Christ's prayers to the Father). Her words too, though similar to Mary's, yet lay more emphasis upon "*my* brother" and are more reproachful than hers. But Mary, when summoned by her sister, obeys what she thinks the Lord's call, and going forth, all the Jews go with her, and at His feet she casts herself in deep reverence, as one who better knows who He is. Again in chapter xii, she is found at His feet doing the suited thing and expressing both her devotedness and her apprehension of the danger He was in from His enemies. She anoints Him for His burial, and her most precious things are consecrated to Him. All this was the fruit of having sat at His feet at first. Her activities were the fruit of this, and therefore put forth in intelligence of His mind.

The contrast of all this in the ungodly is given

in verses 4, 5. Driven before the wind as chaff, is the picture of the instability of the one, who, rejecting God and His counsel, has nothing of truth to stay himself upon. Forsaking one error for another, he is a prey to the ever changing views of men, through whom Satan works to blind the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the knowledge of the glory of God should shine unto them. Therefore, we have even Christians warned not to be “carried about with divers and strange doctrines; for it is a good thing that the heart be *established* with grace.” Heb. xiii, 9. See also Ephes iv, 14. The ungodly, therefore, shall not stand (in the sense of enduring so as to be able to abide it) in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. There will be a final and eternal separation, even as already it exists in spirit. Contrary tastes cannot be the ground of communion, and sin and righteousness are opposite extremes. This is the ground of the eternity of punishment, the unalterably unrepentant condition of the wicked, to overlook which is an impossibility with God as it is impossible for Him to deny Himself. “So I swear in My wrath they shall not *enter into My rest*, for they have not *known My ways*,” Ps. xcv. 11; Heb. iv, 11.

The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous. Blessed comfort for the upright in heart, whose walk is in the light, but unknown to the world; his principles of action and motive, the will and glory of God, he is often misunderstood and misrepresented, yet “I know thy works” will carry comfort to his heart, whilst the way of the ungodly shall perish. What fruit, save sorrow and pain, can come of the ways of sin?

R. T. G.

OUR HOPE, AND ITS PRACTICAL INFLUENCES.

I must not assume, dear reader, Christian though you may be, that you have the Christian hope. Doubtless every one who is not infidel accepts as a fact that the Lord is coming again, but that is a very different thing from having it as a really lively and active expectation in the heart. For most of God's people even yet, it is to be feared, that that coming is too far away to be anything else than dim and inoperative. The practical thing—I cannot call it hope with them—is death, which is actually looked at indeed as the coming of the Lord, or at least, if it be not that, something just as good as that.

Proposing then, if the Lord will, to look, in a series of papers, at what for us is contained in or dates from His coming, and (in our next) to quicken our anticipations by the consideration of its probable nearness, I feel that I must first of all briefly review the Scriptural evidences for the hope itself.

(1) That death is the Lord's coming I need say little about. It is but the assertion of those who think themselves wise enough to substitute their own terms for those of Scripture, not one passage of which can be produced even seemingly to justify it. "If I will that he tarry till I come"—the Lord's words as to the apostle John,—would be rendered simple folly by reading them, "if I will that he tarry till he *die*"; and the report that went abroad among them that heard it, "that that disciple should *not die*," unwarranted as it might be, still shows that with them Christ's coming was the very opposite of dying. So the common quotation, "watch, for ye know not

what hour your Lord doth come" is part of a long prophecy, which if any one believed to be a prediction of believers dying, it would be really vain to reason with him.

Death is departing to be with Christ, not His coming to us at all; and such texts as "We shall not all sleep," and "we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord" shew the very opposite anticipations to those in the minds of masses now.

(2) A providential coming, whether to destroy Jerusalem or for whatever else, is not at all more satisfactory as an interpretation. In Luke xxi. 20-27, the destruction of Jerusalem is *before* the coming of the Lord, not at it, and in Matt. xxiv. 15-31, there is no destruction of the city at all, and it is *after* the tribulation the Lord comes.

Nor could that be providential judgment in which the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, with all His angels, in power and great glory, sends His angels to gather His elect from the four winds, receives the wise virgins, rejects the foolish, and separates the sheep from the goats among the nations.

(3) A coming by the Spirit will not fulfil these indications either, whether that be placed (as it is variously) at Pentecost, or as yet future, and to introduce the millennium. As to the last moreover, a future spiritual coming is additionally unscriptural. Spiritually, He is here, and not to come.

(4) There remains the literal unforced rendering of the words, the only thing that is really worthy of Him who does not use ambiguous speech with those to whom as to His children He utters what is in His heart. Other interpretations are but the fantasies of wise and learned men, which the simple have learned from them, no doubt, but which they could never have originated.

(6) This coming is pre-millennial, and *in order* to the blessing of the earth, although judgment upon those who are destroying it must clear the way for

blessing. This is proved abundantly by many passages, too many even to enumerate: it is part of the web and woof of Scripture. I can specify but a few.

The apostle tells us that "the times of refreshing shall come from the *presence* of the Lord," and as to the way of it, that "He shall send Jesus Christ, whom the heavens must receive *until* the times of the restitution of all things,"—the times of *restoring*, not after they have *been* restored (Acts iii. 19-21.)

It is Israel's conversion that is to be life from the dead to the nations of the world (Rom. xi. 15;) but Israel is nationally converted only when they look upon Him whom they have pierced (Zech. xii. 10, xiii. 1); and that is, when "He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him" (Rev i. 7*).

Zech. xiv. gives us the coming of the Lord in the very midst of Israel's final trouble, His feet standing on the Mount of Olives, and all His saints coming with Him; and in that day the Lord is King over all the earth; there is then to be one Lord and His name one.

Rev. xix. gives us first of all the marriage of the Lamb in heaven, and upon His wife the fine linen which is interpreted to be 'the righteousness of saints.' Then He comes *from* heaven with His armies, upon which the same fine linen covering the Bride is seen. Then there is the judgment of His human, and angelic (xx. 1-3) enemies; and then the saints reign with Christ a thousand years before the resurrection of the rest of the dead, and *their* judgment (xx). But this connects with a line of truth which **must** be separately noticed.

(7) The resurrection of the saints is always connected with the coming of the Lord, and separated not only in character but in time from that of the wicked. The text just quoted, people object to as figurative. There is a vision, no doubt, (what the

* "All kindreds of the earth" her- is literally "all the tribes of the land," whose mourning is given in Zech. xii.

apostle 'saw,') but there is also the *interpretation* of the vision: "this is the first resurrection" is the interpretation of the vision, *and not figure at all*, as also what follows in the 6th verse.*

But the doctrine of the first resurrection is not based upon this text alone. It is everywhere distinguished in the New Testament as "the resurrection *from the dead*" not from *death* merely); a special, selective one. Thus in the Lord's answer to the Sadducees, "those that shall be *accounted worthy* to obtain that world and the resurrection *from the dead* . . . are equal unto the angels; and *are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection*" (see xx. 35, 36.)

Again, in a passage which speaks of the very 'order' of the resurrection, it is said, "Every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterwards *they that are Christ's*, at His coming" (1 Cor. xv. 23.) What more misleading, if all were to rise at once?

(8) Instead of the Church being destined to convert the world, the coming of the Lord is to the judgment of Christendom, which by the removal of the wheat becomes simply a tare-field, as the parable I refer to shows, and *Israel*, not the Church, converted as we have already seen, becomes that which "blossoms and buds and fills the face of the earth with fruit" (Isa. xxvii. 6). That it is Israel literally to which these, and the Old Testament promises generally, belong, the Apostle Paul states in the plainest terms. (Rom. ix. 3, 4).

This hurried and imperfect statement should suffice to show that the coming of the Lord is not an unpractical doctrine at least, but connects itself with a number of important truths. To call any Scriptural

*The objection that it is a resurrection of 'souls,' is forgetfulness merely of a very common non Scripture phraseology, in which the soul, stands for the person himself (see Gen. xii. 13. &c. and the whole question treated in 'Facts and Theories as to a Future State,' part 1, ch. 7.)

The idea that only *martyrs* are spoken of is from want of distinguishing between two separate companies, which are really mentioned, the persons sitting on the thrones as first seen (and who are not raised first then), and the 'souls of those beheaded,' &c. The detail I cannot go into here.

truth indeed unpractical is to dishonour the love that has made it known to us, and to ignore the fact that truth links itself with truth, as error with error. And how little unpractical can that truth be which is to characterize our attitude as Christians: "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, ye may open to him immediately" (Lu. xii. 35, 36). How the Lord Himself appreciates such a spirit of watchfulness, the words that follow in this chapter should sufficiently declare.

But let us trace a few of the practical consequences which flow from the real reception of this truth; for we are bound to admit that it may be as inoperative as any other whatever may be, if the mind alone, and not the heart, be concerned with it. If the heart be in it, it is not too much to say that its influence will be exerted over the whole walk and ways.

In the first place, then, as to the gospel itself, the reception of the true doctrine of the Lord's coming clears it from all suspicion of legality with which the common view almost of necessity imbues it. For, His coming being put off to the end of the world, the resurrection and the judgment of saint and sinner are necessarily thrown together. All stand at the same time before the Judge to be "judged according to their works," and, by a sentence given upon this principle, are received to everlasting blessedness or depart to everlasting fire. In this case who but must hesitate to account his salvation a settled thing before the judgment of the great day settles it? And if that be still according to works, what good of talking about our present justification or salvation being "not of works?" "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord," is the psalmist's cry: "for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified!" But how can we ever plead, "enter not into judgment," when we know, in fact, He *will* enter into judgment, and that

with His servants; and then, what? if the Psalmist's words are true.

Now I do not pretend here to take up the texts out of the confusion of which this doctrine has been manufactured; they will come before us in due course, if this series of papers go on as contemplated. But it is plain that the doctrine of a pre-millennial coming, and of the resurrection of the saints a thousand years before the wicked, separates widely and at once between these two, and takes the saints out of all possibility of coming into the judgment according to their works, which will be the portion of the latter. Nay, the character of the resurrection and its connected events clearly separate them, as the saints are "*raised in glory,*" and caught up to meet the Lord in the air, before He even appears to the world at all: for "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall *we* also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 4.) Certain it is then, however and whenever we shall (as all shall) "give account of ourselves to God," no question can be raised as to the title to glory of a saint who is declared a child of God by being a child of the resurrection, and *already glorified!*

But again, as to our character here, what more suited to keep our hearts out of the world than the assurance that He may come at any moment actually to take us out of it and introduce us into all the joys and glories of the Father's house? People ask, I know, does not the knowledge of an ever impending death act in the same way and with equal power? I ask them in turn, can they really believe it does? and do facts show that it does? The very enthusiasm that they often deprecate as connected with the expectation of the Lord's coming, do they often have to complain of such enthusiasm as connected with death? Even to him who is able to say with the apostle, that 'death is gain,' and 'to depart and be with Christ is far better,' (and doubtless every Christian may and should be able to say that), death is not, and cannot be, what the com-

ing of the Lord is. Death is the dropping of the body, not its redemption. It is personal gain, which may be almost balanced to one's mind (as in the apostle's case) by others' loss. The coming of the Lord is pure gain, pure joy, and no loss whatever. It is the confirmation for ever of every spiritual tie. It is the blessing of all believers from the beginning of time. It is the time for which the Lord Himself is waiting, as the gathering of His own purchased people,—the fruit of the travail of His soul. It is the time too when He shall take His great power, and bring to an end the misrule and disorder under which the earth so long has groaned; the time for which creation looks as for its enfranchisement.

The assertion that death is as powerful a lever as the Lord's coming for the soul, comes only in fine from those who have never known what the latter is; and I think I may safely add, *think it scarcely worth the trouble to enquire.* The Lord Himself has settled for him who will listen to His word, what couples itself with the thought that He delays: "if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth His coming, and shall *begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.*" And has not this effect followed in the Church's history? who that knows anything about it will say that it has not?

A third practical consequence connects itself with this. If the world, according to the common thought, is to be gradually leavened with the gospel, of necessity its character will be changed in that proportion. The numerous Scriptures which speak of the "course of this world" being "according to the prince of the power of the air,"—of "*all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,*"—of the world treating the disciples as it treated the Master, and kindred things to these, cease to apply in the present day, as they did of old. Conformity to the world becomes proportionately more in place, and in a *Christian* world, perchance even a duty. And

when, to supplement and confirm all this, the promises of earthly blessing to an *earthly* people, Israel, are taken as applying *literally* to a people who belong to heaven,—the climax of carnal ease and self-indulgence is simply and surely reached.

How different all becomes when we are made to see the real future of the professing Church, and that He who is at the very door judges this alliance with the world only as departure from and lukewarmness to Himself! If Christendom is to be *judged*, and not approved, how earnestly shall I take His word to test the whole state and condition of things around! how little being with the multitude of even His professed followers will assure my heart as to my path being with Him!

Be assured, beloved reader, the truth of the Lord's coming is one of the greatest practical importance to the Christian. To make light of it is to make light of Christ's own reiterated and emphatic testimony to His people, and to walk by the light of our own wisdom, gone astray from Him. How emphatically, just at the present time, He is calling upon us to awake to the reality and nearness of His approach, we shall, if He permit, consider in our next.

The opposition that comes from Satan as a roaring lion is very different from his serpent character of seductiveness. There is a great difference between the action of that poor old woman who took a green faggot that she might add to the sufferings of a martyr, and that of trying to turn aside the spirit of a martyr with blandishments and seductions.

Oh, that God would act as in the day of Pentecost and put us where we so little stand, as reflectors of that Son of His love, each one presenting the reflection of that Christ at his right hand. Every heart will own that we are not like Pentecost believers.

G. V. W.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

(7) Is the day of the Lord (2 Pet. iii. 10, 12,) the day when He shall come *with* His saints, to commence His millennial reign; and is the earth to be burned up *then*, before the millennium? That is the day we are to be "looking for and hasting unto;" and yet it is the time when "the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved."

Ans. The dissolution of the earth is not before the millennium but after, as Rev. xx. clearly shows. The difficulty connected with the passage in Peter, only results from looking at the day of the Lord, as if it were an ordinary day, which we are warned against in the same chapter. The day of the Lord is in opposition to 'man's day' (I Cor. iv. 3, marg.) It begins when, His 'patience' being over, He rises up to bring the time of his misrule to an end; and while in one sense it never closes, in another it may be perhaps said to do so, when the first heaven and earth have passed away and in the new creation which succeeds, the rod of iron is no more needed.

The millennial state is called by the Lord the 'regeneration' (Matt. xix. 28) and there is a remarkable analogy between the history of the earth and of the individual when looked at in this way. A saved man's history has these successive stages: 1. the state of nature, sin reigning; 2. the state of regeneration, sin still existing, but not reigning; 3. *after the death and resurrection of the body*, (or the 'change' of it, if alive when the Lord comes) the perfect state, sin destroyed altogether. These three stages answer quite to 1. the groaning state of creation in the bondage of corruption; 2. the millennial state, righteousness reigning, but still sin existing; and 3. after the *dissolution* Peter speaks of the new heavens and earth wherein dwells righteousness.

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