

THE GOSPEL MAGAZINE

"COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE MY PEOPLE, SAITH YOUR GOD."
"ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE."
"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER."

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The Family Portion:

OR, WORDS OF SPIRITUAL CAUTION, COUNSEL, AND COMFORT.

"Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 CORINTHIANS i. 4.

DIVINE GOODNESS, STRENGTH, AND OMNISCIENCE.

"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him."—NAHUM i. 7.

THE declaration that "the Lord is good" follows declarations of His vengeance, His power, and His sovereignty. Many people are inclined to dwell on God's love and to leave out declarations of His wrath, but the New Testament not only says "God is love," but "God is a consuming fire." Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved His people and sent His Son to be a propitiation for their sins. That is a grand, a comforting and a blessed truth. But "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. i. 18). The Bible not only speaks of heaven but also of hell. Happy are they who, through the substitutionary sufferings of Christ, are saved from hell, and who can look forward with full assurance to an inheritance in heaven. Before the prophet Nahum says "The Lord is good," he says "The Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. . . . Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him."

We should therefore beware of taking a one-sided view of His character. We need to tremble at His word, and realise the enormity of sin, and the awful peril with which an impenitent

sinner is confronted. At the same time we may take immense comfort from the assurance that Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, was given by the Father to die the Just for the unjust, and that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Let us now thankfully meditate on the three declarations given in the text at the head of this *Family Portion*. They are declarations which are full of comfort for all the members of God's redeemed family.

1. First we are taught that the Lord is good. He is *essentially good*. Goodness is one of His attributes. He is "abundant in goodness and truth." Of men it is declared, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." The believer has to confess and say, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." The believer is bound further to say with the apostle, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." "The flesh," which is still in every believer, "lusteth against the Spirit" (Rom. iii. 12; vii. 25; Gal. v. 17). Because, therefore, the flesh is in antagonism against the Spirit, the believer can never rightly say he has no sin. If he does say such a thing the Apostle John says, "the truth is not in him" (1 John i. 8). "The Lord," however, "is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works." "A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Psalm cxlv. 17; Deut. xxxii. 4). He is *good to men in general*. Ungodly men do not realise how much the goodness of God is extended to them. "The Lord," we read, "is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works." Of Him it is said, "Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing" (Psalm cxlv. 9, 16). "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts xvii. 25, 28). All men, however ungodly, are indebted to Him for life, food and clothing, and every earthly comfort. Yet the ungodly ignore Him, live in rebellion against Him, and are unthankful for all the blessings they daily receive from Him. They are glad of the sunshine and the rain in their season, but they fail to remember that "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. v. 45). Even those who are the Lord's believing people are not half thankful enough for all the temporal and spiritual blessings which He pours upon them. They need to "give thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephes. v. 20).

He is *especially good to His Own people.*

“He is good to them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him” (Lam. iii. 25). “They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing” (Psalm xxxiv. 10). Seeking ones are His people. They have been born again.

He is *good to them in regard to their sins.*

Concerning them we read the comforting words, “Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee” (Psalm lxxxvi. 5). The blood of His Son cleanseth them from all sin. He assures them that their sins and iniquities He will remember no more.

He is *good to them in all their circumstances.*

Their circumstances are very varied, but “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. viii. 28).

He is *good to them in reference to all their needs.*

“He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness” (Psalm cvii. 9). He supplies all their need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

He is *good to them always.*

He never changes in His regard for them. They can say, “The goodness of God endureth continually” (Psalm lii. 1). Then, they can go on to say, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever” (Psalm xxiii. 6).

What, then, shall we say to these things? Shall we not say, “Truly God is good . . . even to such as are of a clean heart” (Psalm lxxiii. 1). O let us take comfort from the precious assurance that “the Lord is good.” This is eternally true.

2. Our second point is, *the Lord is a stronghold or a strength in the day of trouble.*

Ever since sin entered the world, trouble more or less has been experienced even by God’s people. Abel must have been troubled when he found that his brother Cain hated him. Noah must have been troubled in mind when he saw the whole world of the ungodly drowned by the flood. Immensely thankful for his own safety and the safety of his family, thankful for God’s infinite grace to himself and his loved ones, he must have been greatly solemnised by the sight of divine judgment on the ungodly. How true are the words, “Man is born unto trouble.” He is “of few days, and full of trouble.” Our Lord said to His people, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John xvi. 33). The Apostle Paul exhorted the Thessalonian saints

not to be moved by their troubles, "for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto" (1 Thess. iii. 3). Again, the same apostle said, "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv. 22). But the Lord is "a stronghold or a strength in the day of trouble." John Newton had much experience of the Lord's goodness, and he wrote :

" His love in times past
 Forbids me to think
 He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink :
 Each sweet Ebenezer
 I have in review,
 Confirms His good pleasure
 To help me quite through."

It is certainly and verily true that God is a stronghold to His people in their days of trouble. There is a time in their experience when *they have soul trouble*. They are in trouble about their sins. They are convicted by the Holy Ghost that they are poor sinners. Then they are troubled about their eternal safety. Then the Lord by His strength upholds them, keeps them from despair, reveals to them that Christ bore their sins in His Own body on the tree. Then are they strengthened and comforted when He says, "Their iniquity is pardoned" (Isaiah xl. 2).

They have *family troubles* and difficulties, but the Lord guides, strengthens, and delivers them. David says, "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." But the Lord is just the same to others of His people. Hence we read, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm xxxiv. 6, 19).

They have *business troubles*, but the Lord is their strength in troubles of that kind.

National troubles, too, sadden their hearts. They are concerned about the sins of the nation. They mourn over the multitude who are God-forgetting, lovers of worldly pleasures, desecrators of the sabbath, given to gambling, and who have no fear of God before their eyes.

Amid all their troubles of every kind they take comfort from the assurance that "The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. xviii. 10). God is their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. "Therefore," they say, "will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Under all circumstances

and in all troubles they can say, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. In wars, in earthquakes, and in famines, He is their hiding-place, their stronghold, their strength.

3. The third declaration of the prophet is, "*The Lord knoweth them that trust in Him.*"

He knows *who they are*. They are surrounded by crowds of people who do not love Him, but He is able to distinguish between those who serve Him and those who serve Him not. Our Lord says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John x. 27). "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. ii. 19). He knows their names. They were written in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world.

He knows *how they are*. How true this was in the case of His ancient people when they were in the bondage of Egypt. He said to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows." Hence He added, "I am come down to deliver them" (Exodus iii. 7, 8). David says, "Thou hast considered my trouble; Thou hast known my soul in adversities" (Psalm xxxi. 7). He knows our desires and our groans. "All my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee" (Psalm xxxviii. 9). He knows our desires, our groans and our sorrows. He knows everything about the needs and circumstances of His people. He is therefore at no loss how to deliver them.

He knows *where they are*. We may be unable to help some of our friends because we don't know where they are. We have lost their address. The Lord knows our exact address. When the Lord wanted to send a messenger of comfort to Saul of Tarsus He was able to tell the messenger his exact address. "Arise," He said, "and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight" (Acts ix. 10-12). Thus the Lord knew the street in which Saul was living, He knew whose house he was living in, what he was doing and what he was expecting.

What an immense comfort are the words, "He knoweth them that trust in Him." "O taste and see (then) that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him" (Psalm xxxiv. 8).

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Wayside Notes.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NEW BIRTH.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

—JOHN iii. 3.

ONE of the great truths of the Bible is the doctrine of the New Birth. It is taught in the New Covenant (Jer. xxxi. 33), and its necessity is insisted on by our Lord in His conversation with Nicodemus. We ask the attention of our readers to four points in connection with this important truth. We unfolded this truth to a Christian audience in London some time ago, but it is a great doctrine to which readers at home and abroad need to give attention.

1. *First let us think of the Necessity of the New Birth.*

Our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The words might be translated, "Except *anyone* be born from above." Whether a man be a Jew or a Gentile, the new birth is absolutely necessary, if he is to enjoy, partake of, or possess the kingdom of God. That kingdom is called "the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. v. 5). It is a kingdom into which believers are now translated (Col. i. 13). It is a kingdom in which the righteous shall hereafter shine forth (Matt. xiii. 43). Into that kingdom nothing that defileth, nor whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie shall in anywise enter. Inasmuch, therefore, as we are all *guilty of sin and are* possessed of a nature that is enmity against God and are not subject to His law, and are incapable of pleasing Him, we need to be born again. We need to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. We must be born anew, otherwise we cannot enter God's spiritual kingdom on earth, nor His heavenly kingdom hereafter. "Ye must be born again" are words our Lord addresses to all sorts and conditions of men, whether Jews or Gentiles.

2. *The Character of this New Birth.*

Nicodemus thought our Lord meant a second *natural* birth. "How can a man be born when he is old?" he asked. How can he a "second time" be born in a natural way?

Our Lord answered, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Various explanations have been given of the meaning of these words. We suggest that the most probable meaning

is that the word "water" is used in a figurative sense to set forth the purifying operations of the Holy Ghost.

Later on, during His public ministry, our Lord stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive" (John vii. 37-39; see also John iv. 13, 14).

John the Baptist used "fire" as a symbol of the purifying work of the Spirit, when he said, "I indeed baptise you with water. . . . He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. iii. 11).

Water is used in the Old Testament as a symbol of the cleansing operations of the Spirit. The Lord says to His people, Israel, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring" (Isaiah xlv. 3).

The future spiritual blessings promised to Israel, including the new birth, are referred to as being brought about by the cleansing operations of the Holy Spirit, and these cleansing operations are symbolised by water. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-28). All these are New Covenant blessings.

To be born again in a natural way would not in the least degree improve our spiritual condition. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." All parents are fallen. They themselves were shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin. They are born in sin. They are born with an evil nature in which dwelleth no good thing. Their children are like themselves. You cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Hence, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" and cannot be anything else. On the other hand, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is a spiritual nature—a new nature, "a new creature," a "new man."

3. The Source of this New Birth.

The Apostle John says that God Himself is the source. He says, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the

sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name : which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, *but of God* " (John i. 12, 13).

The new birth is not transmitted from father to son. Parents can pray for the regeneration of their children, and they can and should instruct them in Bible and Gospel truth. Their primary and chief concern should be the spiritual and eternal welfare of their children, but they cannot give them a new heart. They cannot produce the new birth. They cannot impart to them saving faith in the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The will of the corrupt flesh within cannot bring about the new birth. The will of man is absolutely helpless in this matter. If a sinner is born again, it must be by the will of God. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (James i. 18).

Let us then humbly and unreservedly put aside all thought of human power or human will bringing about the new birth, and let us cry unto God Himself to display His quickening and regenerating power on those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

The sovereign action of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead alone brings about the new birth. It is ascribed to the Father in John i. 13. It is ascribed to the Son in 1 John ii. 28, 29. It is ascribed to God the Spirit in John iii. 6-8.

4. *The Effects of the New Birth in the Life of the Believer.*

These are set forth in the first Epistle of John.

"Ye know that *every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him*" (1 John ii. 29).

Every one who is born of the Spirit lives soberly, *righteously* and godly, looking for that blessed hope.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (1 John iii. 9; v. 18).

This cannot mean that one born of God does not sin at all; for "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8).

It is suggested that the words mean that the regenerated man does not sin as a habit. He does not habitually live in sin. He abhors that which is evil and cleaves to that which is good. He seeks to put away lying and to speak the truth. He seeks constantly to give no place to the devil. If he stole at one time, he aims at stealing no more. He seeks to put away all bitterness, anger, clamour and evil speaking, with all malice. He seeks to be kind, tender-hearted and forgiving, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven him (see Eph. iv. 22-32).

Another suggested meaning of the words is that the new nature

sins not. In any case there is a mighty change in the life of a man who is born again. He is a new creature, and old things are passed away, and all things are become new (see 2 Cor. v. 17).

Love to the brethren is another great effect of the new birth. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John iv. 7).

The absence of love to the brethren is a sure proof that we are not born again. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John iii. 14).

Note again that "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*" (1 John v. 1). This belief or faith no doubt includes faith in Christ's merits (compare Rom. x. 9, 10).

Some teach that a man is born again because he believes, but is it not plain that the truth is the other way about? *He believes because he is born again.* A distinguished American theologian says: "Men who are dead in trespasses and sins are utterly unable to have saving faith, just as completely unable as a dead man lying in the tomb is unable to contribute the slightest bit to his resurrection. When a man is born again, the Holy Spirit works faith in him, and he contributes nothing whatever to that blessed result." In other words, saving faith follows, but does not precede the new birth.

The same writer says: "Those who are saved deserve eternal death just as much as do those who are lost, and they, exactly like those who are lost, are utterly unable to believe in Christ until they are born again by an act which is an act of God alone. Even their faith is worked in them by the Holy Spirit in accordance with God's choice of them from all eternity. Thus their salvation is not due to anything that is in them. It is a matter of pure grace."

Another effect of the new birth is that *a regenerated man overcomes the world.* "*Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.* And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John v. 4).

The regenerated man triumphs by faith in God over the persecutions of the world, and over worldly pleasure, worldly literature, worldly music, worldly ways and worldly company. He comes out and is separate, and touches not the unclean thing.

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Pilgrim Papers.

WELLSPRINGS.

"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine Own hands."

—PSALM CXXXVIII. 8.

A SHORT Psalm, and made up of prayer and praise. A humble confidence runs through all the verses of David's trust in his God, and that in spite of his walking "in the midst of trouble." The sweet Psalmist of Israel relies upon his God Who *had* been with him through all his chequered life, and would be with him as his unchangeable faithful Friend even unto the end. Oh! what a blessed rest there is in being enabled to confide and trust in the Lord under whatever perplexing trial or mysterious circumstances! But faith is the gift of God, and we poor fearing mortals have nothing to boast of! We are dependent upon Him every moment, and have nothing acceptable in us except that which we first received from Him. And so it is good for the exercised soul, and glorifying to God, whenever any one of His dear, tried, tempest-tossed people is enabled to trust Him in the dark and sing of past mercies and deliverances, and "call to remembrance his songs in the night" of darkness and trouble and fears, and encourage himself in the Lord his God and sing as did dear John Newton, "He, Who *hath* helped me hitherto, *will* help me all my journey through, and give me daily cause to raise fresh Ebenezers to His praise." Oh! it is a good thing and a health-conducing cordial to the soul, however dark and deep and mysterious a place of trial one may now be in, it is a good thing *then* to give thanks unto your God, beloved, as you remind yourself of what He has been to you and what He has done for you in the past! He is the same to-day, although clouds may temporarily veil His face from you, and your sun is behind a cloud. This was the sweet confidence of David in the Psalm before us: for he was evidently, as he wrote, "walking in the midst of trouble," and a target for "the wrath of his enemies." How sweet it is to read of him in such seasons as encouraging himself in the Lord his God! And so he says here in the text before us, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." And why? What ground has David to look unto the afterward and future of this trial which at the moment is exercising him? It is all because "Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever"—Thou art the faithful Friend and Thy mercy never wavers nor wanes, Thou art God and *my* God, even the eternal unchangeable One. And here is Thy servant in some hedged-up place and under some fresh peculiar trial of faith and yet reminded of past deliverances, wondrous help "just in

the last distressing hour." Oft times in Thy kind compassion Thou didst lead me on so softly that there was left no room for fear.

"And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

Again, under the all-sustaining, all-delivering hand of their faithful God, His children prove, and will ever prove, that God is a delivering, and not a forsaking God. When at the dawn of the year this word upon which we are meditating was given me, and passed on to others in my subsequent letters, one beloved correspondent wrote, "Your text for 1947 is a beautiful one; half of it perfect confidence, and the other half continual prayer. Our poverty keeps us, so to speak, unto the Lord's sufficiency and undertaking." And so it will ever be, with each and all the family of grace, and our exceeding need will always be met by His exceeding love and faithfulness. "When most we need that helping hand, that Friend is always near; with earth and heaven at His command, He waits to answer prayer." So we see in the verse under consideration at this time the sweet assurance of the Psalmist in the God Who had begun the good work in his soul; and that assurance grounded upon the character of his God. The faith given him justified his assurance on the ground of the divine promise. It was a declaration of what his God would do for him, *i. e.*, perfect His own work in his soul. It was likewise an assurance of His unchangeable mercy which "endureth for ever," and it drew forth from his heart in gracious humility the plea, "forsake not the work of Thine Own hand." Thus, in these three sentences we have an epitome of David's faith in a living God. He well knew that what the Lord had begun He would perfectly perform. He was resting upon the unchangeable God Who had sworn once in His holiness that He would not lie unto David. This promise was as sure as was the promise to Jacob: "I will not leave thee until I have done all that I have spoken to thee of." The promise is also as sure unto every child of God, collectively and individually, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." It is all on the sure ground indeed of His unchangeable character and mercy. He has declared Himself, "I am the Lord, I change not." "Thy mercy, O God, endureth for ever." He is a covenant God Who has declared of Himself, "My mercy I will not remove, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips." This, then, beloved child of God, is the ground of all your pleadings and wrestlings at the mercy seat and upon which you can urge your suit, "Forsake not the work of Thine Own hands." It is the triumphing of little faith in a living, a promising and a performing God, Who having begun the good work will finish it. In which holy confidence the Apostle Paul could write to his Philippian brethren, "Having begun the good work in you, He will perform, and finish it" (Phil. i. 6).

Oh! children of God, poor and despised as you may be, and sighing for the sins and unbelief which try you daily and hamper your pilgrim

path and bring you down so low in spirit, may this sweet promise which lifted up the Psalmist lift you up from your low place and give you to exult in the blessed truth of our text: "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the work of Thine Own hands." You have oft-times loved to sing in dear Toplady's words, "My name from the palms of His hands eternity will not erase; Impressed on His heart it remains, In marks of indelible grace. Yes, I to the end shall endure, As sure as the earnest is given; More happy, but not more secure, The glorified spirits in heaven"! Remember, then, when at your lowest that Toplady's God and your God was also the Psalmist's unchangeably faithful God. Of Him he had said, "And this God is our God for ever and ever, and He will be our Guide unto death." Yours, beloved reader, is the faithful covenant-keeping God Who *will* perfect what He has begun of all His good work in your immortal soul and will follow up in His great mercy all your steps, and that in spite of all your sins, failures and demerits, and give you consequently in humble confidence to plead, "Forsake not the works of Thine Own hands." R.

THE WEATHER AND DIVINE JUDGMENTS.

A LADY in Kent wrote (March 20th, 1947): "We are indeed, as a nation, experiencing God's just judgments for our sinful ways and neglect of Him in this unprecedented weather."

A lady in Bath wrote (March 20th, 1947): "Flood waters have played up many Bath people lately. We tell people God is really showing His displeasure at the wickedness of the world. Were you not upset at Bath voting for Sunday cinemas? It was terrible that some of our clergy even said they thought it best for the country."

A lawyer, writing in a Church paper, said: "Can we, dare we, close our eyes to the fact that the unexampled weather that is visiting us shows the hand of God? Man has dared to assert his superiority to all natural powers, and God has intervened to show that they are beyond man's control. Will the nation and its rulers see, and understand? And will the Church and its leaders accept the challenge to repentance and renewal and faith?"

A lady in Cambridge wrote on March 24th, 1947: "God's judgments are certainly upon our nation at this serious time. Oh may He 'in wrath remember mercy,' and our people turn to Him and 'learn righteousness.'"

We pray day by day for relief in your district, and all others throughout the country, with the suffering these floods entail. "The Lord on high is mightier than the sound of many waters."

Sermons and Notes of Sermons.

THE IMMINENT DANGER AND ONLY SURE RESOURCE OF THIS NATION.

A SERMON (ABBREVIATED) BY THE REV. JOHN NEWTON,
PREACHED IN ST. MARY WOOLNOTH CHURCH, LONDON, ON
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH, 1794, THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A
GENERAL FAST.

"Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?"—JONAH iii. 9.

I. BUT it is time to attend immediately to our own concerns. The professed purpose of our meeting to-day is to humble ourselves before Almighty God, and to send up our prayers and supplications to the divine Majesty, for obtaining pardon of our sins, and for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved, and imploring His blessing and assistance on the arms of His Majesty by sea and land, and for restoring and perpetuating peace, safety, and prosperity to himself and to his kingdoms. I hope these expressions accord with the language and desire of our hearts.

And now—O for a glance of what Isaiah saw, and has described, in chapter vi. ! O that we, by the power of that faith which is the evidence of things unseen, could behold the glory of the Lord filling this house; that we could realise the presence, and the attitude of their attendant angels! They cover their faces and their feet with their wings, as overpowered by the beams of His Majesty, and conscious, if not of defilement like us, yet of unavoidable inability as creatures, to render Him the whole of that praise and homage which are justly due to Him. O that by faith we could enter into the spirit of their ascription, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is filled with His glory!" If we were all thus affected, as the prophet was, surely each one for himself would adopt the prophet's language. Or if a comfortable hope in the Gospel prevented us from crying out, *Wo is me, I am undone!*—we should at least say (the Hebrew word might be so rendered) *I am silenced, I am struck dumb! I am overwhelmed with confusion and shame; for I am a man of unclean lips myself, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

If we have a degree of this impression, we shall not be at leisure to perplex ourselves concerning men or measures, the second causes, or immediate instruments of our calamities. The evil of sin contrasted with the holiness and glory of God, will engross our thoughts. And we shall ascribe all the troubles we either feel or fear to our own sins, and the sins of those among whom we dwell.

1. Let us first look at home. I am a man of unclean lips. I am a sinner. This confession suits us all, and is readily made by all who know themselves. A person approaching London from the neighbouring hills, usually sees it obscured by a cloud of smoke. This cloud is the aggregate of the smoke, to which every house furnishes its respective quota. It is no unfit emblem of the sin and the misery which abound in this great metropolis. The Lord said of the Amorites, at a certain period, Their iniquity is not yet full (Gen. xv. 16). I hope the measure of our iniquity is not yet full; but it is filling every day, and we are all daily contributing to fill it. True believers, though by grace delivered from the reigning power of sin (Rom. vi. 14), are still sinners. In many things we offend all, in thought, word and deed. We are now called upon to humble ourselves before God, for the sins of our ignorance, and for the more aggravated sins we have committed against light, and experience—for those personal sins, the record of which is only known to God and our own consciences—for the defects and defilements of our best services—for our great and manifold failures in the discharge of our relative duties, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, or servants, and as members of the community. Our dulness in the ways of God, our alertness in the pursuit of our own will and way; our indifference to what concerns His glory, compared with the quickness of our apprehensions when our own temporal interests are affected—are so many proofs of our ingratitude and depravity. The sins of the Lord's Own people are so many, and so heightened by the consideration of His known goodness, that if He was to enter into judgment with them only, they could offer no other plea than that which He has mercifully provided for them: "If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand? but there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayst be feared" (Psalm cxxx. 3, 4).

2. It is easy to declaim against the wickedness of the times. But only they who are duly affected with the multitude and magnitude of their own sins can be competent judges of what the prophet meant, or felt, when he said, I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. We ought to be no less concerned (though in a different manner) for the sins of those among whom we dwell, than for our own. We shall be so, if with the eyes of our mind we behold the King, the Lord of hosts; because His glory, which should be the dearest object to our hearts, is dishonoured by them.

I think this nation may be considered as the Israel of the New Testament, both with respect of His goodness to us, and our perverse returns to Him. He has been pleased to select us, as a peculiar people, and to show amongst us such instances of His protection, His favour, His grace, and His patience, as cannot be paralleled in the annals of any other nation. We have no certain account when the name of Jesus the Saviour was first known in this island; it was probably at an early period of the Christian era. But we do know, that after the long dark night of superstition and ignorance which covered Christendom for many ages, the

dawn of returning Gospel-light was first seen amongst us. From the time of Wickliffe, the morning star of the Reformation, the true Gospel has been known, preached, received, and perpetuated to this day. There have been times when they who loved this Gospel have suffered for it. They were preserved faithful in defiance of stripes, fines, imprisonment, and death itself. But those times are past. We enjoy not only light, but liberty, and the rights of conscience and private judgment, in a degree till of late unknown.

We have likewise been long favoured with peace, though often principals in wars, which have been very calamitous, both to our enemies, and to the nations which have taken part in our affairs. Our intestine broils at different times have contributed to form and establish our present happy constitution. We breathe the air of civil liberty. Our insular situation and naval force, by the blessing of God, have preserved us from foreign invasions; and when such have been attempted, the winds and seas have often fought our battles. Our wide-spreading and flourishing commerce has raised us to a pitch of opulence, which excites the admiration and envy of other nations. Great Britain and Ireland appear but as small spots upon a globe or map; but our interests and influence extend in every direction, to the uttermost part of the earth.

Will not the Lord's words to Israel apply with equal propriety to us? What could have been done to My vineyard, that I have not done? Wherefore, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? (Isaiah v. 4). How is the blessed Gospel improved among us? This would be a heavy day to me, if I did not believe, and know, that there are those among our various denominations, who prize and adorn it. If these could be all assembled in one place, I hope they would be found a very considerable number: and for their sakes, and in answer to their prayers, I humbly trust that mercy will still be afforded to us. But compared with the multitudes who reject, despise, or dishonour it, I fear they are very few. Too many hate it with a bitter hatred, and exert all their influence to oppose and suppress it. The great doctrines of the Reformation are treated with contempt; and both they who preach, and they who espouse them, are considered as visionaries or hypocrites, knaves or fools. The Gospel of God is shunned as a pestilence, or complained of as a burden, almost wherever it is known. Wisdom is indeed justified of all her children (Luke vii. 35). The Gospel is the power of God to the salvation of them that believe (Rom. i. 16). It recalls them from error, from wickedness, and from misery, guides their feet into the ways of peace, and teaches them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world (Titus ii. 12). But in the number of those who profess to receive it, there are too many who confirm and increase the prejudices of those who speak against what they know not. Alas! what extravagant opinions, what fierce dissensions, what loose conversations, what open offences, may be found amongst many who would be thought professors of that Gospel which only breathes the spirit of holiness, love, and peace!

What then must be the state of those who avowedly live without God in the world? I need not enlarge upon this painful subject, which forces itself upon the mind, if we only walk the streets, or look into the newspapers. It is not necessary to inform my hearers that infidelity, licentiousness, perjury, profaneness, the neglect and contempt of God's sabbaths and worship abound. The laws of God, and the laws of the land, so far as their object is to enforce the observance of His commands, are openly and customarily violated in every rank of life. In a day when the Lord of hosts calls to weeping and mourning, thoughtless security, dissipation and riot, are the characteristics of our national spirit (Isaiah xxii. 12, 13). The loss of public spirit, and that impatience of subordination, so generally observable, so widely diffused, which are the consequences of our sins against God, are, in themselves, moral causes sufficient to ruin the nation, unless His mercy interposes in our behalf.

I should be inexcusable, considering the share I have formerly had in that unhappy business, if, upon this occasion, I should omit to mention the African slave-trade. I do not rank this amongst our national sins; because I hope and believe, a very great majority of the nation, earnestly long for its suppression. But hitherto, petty and partial interests prevail against the voice of justice, humanity, and truth. This enormity, however, is not sufficiently laid to heart. If you are justly shocked by what you hear of the cruelties practised in France, you would perhaps be shocked much more, if you could fully conceive of the evils and miseries inseparable from this traffic, which I apprehend, not from hearsay, but from my own observation, are equal in atrocity, and perhaps superior in number, in the course of a single year, to any or all the worst actions which have been known in France since the commencement of their revolution. There is a cry of blood against us; a cry accumulated by the accession of fresh victims, of thousands, of scores of thousands, I had almost said of hundreds of thousands, from year to year.

It is but a brief and faint outline I have attempted to give of the present state of this nation, in the sight of Almighty God, and of the sins for which we are this day assembled to humble ourselves before Him.

II. Have we not therefore cause to say with the Ninevites, who can tell? Is it not a peradventure? Is there more than a possibility that we may yet obtain mercy?

If our sins are no less numerous, no less of a scarlet dye, than those of other nations, and exceedingly aggravated beyond theirs, by being committed against clearer light, and the distinguished advantages we have long enjoyed: if we have not only transgressed the laws of God in common with others, but daringly trampled upon the gracious tenders of His forgiveness, which He has long continued to propose to us, with a frequency and energy almost peculiar to ourselves: if all the day long He has stretched out His hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people (Rom. x. 21), and, hitherto, almost in vain: if neither the tokens of His displeasure, nor the declarations of His love, have made a suitable

impression upon our minds—who can tell if He will yet be entreated? May we not fear, lest He should say, My Spirit shall strive with them no more. They are joined to their idols, let them alone (Hosea iv. 17). When you spread forth your hands, I will hide My face from you; when you make many prayers, I will not hear? (Isaiah i. 15).

Where are now the mighty empires, which were once thought rooted and established as the everlasting mountains? They have disappeared like the mists upon the mountain tops. Nothing of them remains but their names. They perished, and their memorials have almost perished with them (Psalm ix. 6). The patience of God bore with them for a time, and until the purposes for which He raised them up were answered; but when the measure of their iniquity was full, they passed away, and were dispersed, like foam upon the waters. What security have we from such a catastrophe? Or what could we answer, if God should put that question to us, "Shall not I visit for these things? Shall not My soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" (Jer. v. 9).

Where are now the churches which once flourished in Greece, and in the lesser Asia? When the Apostle Paul wrote to the former, and when our Lord indited His epistles to the latter, most of them were in a prosperous state. If there ever was a time when the commendations given to them were applicable to professors of the Gospel in our land, I fear we can hardly claim them at present. Can it be justly said of us, that our faith and love are everywhere spoken of and that we are examples to all that believe? That our works, and service, and faith, and patience, are known, and the last to be more than the first? (Rom. i. 8; I Thess. i. 7; Rev. ii. 19). Or rather, may it not be said of too many, that while they profess to believe in God, in works they deny Him? (Titus i. 16). That they are neither hot nor cold. That they have a name to live, and are dead. That they have at least forgotten their first love? (Rev. iii. 1, 15; ii. 4). When these defects and declensions began to prevail in the first churches, the Lord admonished and warned them; but instead of watching and repenting, they gradually became more and more remiss. At length their glory departed, and their candlesticks were removed out of their places. Many regions which once rejoiced in the light of the Gospel, have been long overspread with Mohamedan darkness; and the inhabitants are wretched, ignorant slaves.

Let us not trust in outward privileges, nor rest in a form of godliness destitute of the power. It will be in vain to say, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we (Jer. vii. 4), if the Lord of the temple should depart from us. When the Israelites were afraid of the Philistines, they carried the ark of the Lord with them to battle. But God disappointed their vain confidence. He delivered the ark of His glory into the hands of their enemies (I Samuel iv. 5, 11); to teach them, and to teach us, that formal hypocritical worshippers have no good ground to hope for His protection.

Alas! then, who can tell? Appearances are very dark at present. Besides what we may expect or fear from the rage and madness of our

foreign enemies, we have much to apprehend at home. A spirit of discord has gone forth. Jeshurun has waxed fat, and kicked (Deut. xxxiii. 15). Many Britons seem weary of liberty, peace, and order. Our happy constitution, our mild government, our many privileges, admired by other nations, are despised and depreciated amongst ourselves: and that not only by the thoughtless and licentious, by those who, having little to lose, may promise themselves a possibility of gain, in a time of disturbance and confusion, but they are abetted and instigated by persons of sense, character, and even of religion. I should be quite at a loss to account for this, if I did not consider it as a token of the Lord's displeasure. When He withdraws His blessing, no union can long subsist.

Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God, with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, whom the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in the want of all things (Deut. xxviii. 47, 48). These words of Moses to rebellious Israel emphatically describe the former and the present state of many of the French nation who have been despoiled, insulted, and glad if they could escape (great numbers could not so escape) with the loss of their all, and at the peril of their lives, to a more hospitable shore. May their sufferings remind us of our deserts! Who can tell if the Lord may yet be merciful unto us, and exempt us from similar calamities!

III. But though we have much cause to mourn for our sins, and humbly to deprecate deserved judgments, let us not despond. The Lord our God is a merciful God. Who can tell but He may repent, and turn from the fierceness of His anger, that we perish not? If the professed business of this day be not confined to a day, but if, by His blessing, it may produce repentance not to be repented of, then I am warranted to tell you, from His word, that there is yet hope. You that tremble for the ark, for the cause of God, whose eyes affect your hearts, who grieve for sin, and for the miseries which sin has multiplied upon the earth, take courage. Let the hearts of the wicked shake, like the leaves of the trees when agitated by a storm (Isaiah vii. 2); but be not you like them. The Lord God is your refuge and strength, your resting place and your hiding place; under the shadow of His wings you shall be safe (Psalm xli. 1; xc. 1; cxix. 114).

(1) He Who loved you, and died for your sins, is the Lord of glory. All power in heaven and earth is committed unto Him (Matt. xxviii. 18). The Lord reigneth, let the earth be never so unquiet (Psalm xcix. 1). All creatures are instruments of His will. The wrath of man, so far as it is permitted to act, shall praise Him, shall be made subservient to the accomplishment of His great designs; and the remainder of that wrath, all their projected violence, which does not coincide with His wise and comprehensive plan, He will restrain (Psalm lxxvi. 10). In vain they rage, and fret, and threaten. They act under a secret commission, and can do no more than He permits them. If they attempt it,

He has a hook and a bridle in their mouths (II Kings xix. 28). When the enemies would come in like a flood, He can lift up a standard against them (Isaiah lix. 19). As He has set bounds and bars to the tempestuous sea, beyond which it cannot pass, saying, Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed (Job xxxviii. 10, 11); so, with equal ease, He can still the madness of the people (Psalm lxxv. 7).

You do well to mourn for the sins and miseries of those who know Him not. But if you make Him your fear and your dread, He will be a sanctuary to you, and keep your hearts in peace, though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea (Isaiah viii. 13, 14; Psalm xli. 2).

(2) Your part and mine, is to watch and pray. Let us pray for ourselves, that we may be found waiting, with our loins girded up, and our lamps burning (Mark xiii. 35; xiv. 38), that we may be prepared to meet His will in every event. Let us pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for His Church, which is dear to Him, as the pupil of His eye, for the spread of His Gospel, and the extension of His kingdom, till His great name be known and adored from the rising to the setting of the sun, and the whole earth be filled with His glory (Malachi i. 11). Many splendid prophecies are yet unfulfilled: and He is now bringing forward their accomplishment. Light would undoubtedly arise out of this darkness. Let us earnestly pray for a blessing from on high, upon our beloved king and his family, upon the counsels of government and Parliament, and upon all subordinate authority in Church and State, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty, that religion and good order may be established, and iniquity be put to shame and silence. Thus we may hope to be secured, by the sure, though secret mark of divine protection (Ezekiel ix. 4). The Lord will be our shield, though many should suffer or fall around us. The very hairs of our heads are numbered (Matthew x. 30). Or if, for the manifestation of our faith, and the power of His grace, He should permit us to share in common calamities, we may rely upon Him to afford us strength according to our day (Deut. xxxiii. 25). He is always near to His people, a very present help in the time of trouble; and He can make the season of their greatest tribulations, the season of their sweetest consolations (II Cor. i. 5).

(3) And let us pray in faith. Let us remember what great things the Lord has done in answer to prayer. When sin had given Sennacherib rapid success in his invasion of Judah, he did not know that he was no more than an axe or a saw in the hand of God (Isaiah x. 15; xxxvii. 14-36). He ascribed his victories to his own prowess, and thought himself equally sure of Jerusalem. But Hezekiah defeated him upon his knees. He spread his blasphemous letter before the Lord in the temple, and prayed, and the Assyrian army melted away like snow. When Peter was shut up, and chained in prison, the chains fell from his hands, the locks and bolts gave way, and the iron gate opened,

while the Church was united in earnest prayer for his deliverance (Acts xii. 5-13).

And as we have heard, so we have seen. God has signally answered the prayers of His people in our own time. Much prayer, both public and private, was offered for our beloved king during his late illness; and how wonderful, how sudden, how seasonable was his recovery! Surely this was the finger of God! When He thus removed our apprehensions, we were like them that dream (Psalm cxxvi. 1).

I believe prayer was no less efficacious, towards the end of the year 1792. I know many people treated the idea of danger at that time as chimerical, because the Lord was pleased to advert it. But I hope we have not quite forgotten the language we heard, and the persons we daily met with in the street, the many daring cabals which were held in this city, and the threatenings which were written in large characters upon the walls of our houses, at almost every corner. But the hearts of men were turned like the tide in the critical moment. Then I think the interposition of the Lord was evident! Then we had a repeated proof that He hears and answers prayers!

The present likewise is a very important crisis. All that is dear to us as men, as Britons, as Christians, is threatened. Our enemies are inveterate and enraged. Our sins testify against us. But if we humble ourselves before God, forsake our sins, and unite in supplications for mercy, who can tell but He may be entreated to give us that help which it would be in vain to expect from man? Yea, we have encouragement to hope that He will be for us (Rom. viii. 31), and then none can prevail against us. But without His blessing our most powerful efforts, and best concerted undertakings cannot succeed.

You, who have access to the throne of grace, whose hearts are concerned for the glory of God, and who lament not only the temporal calamities attendant upon war, but the many thousands of souls who are yearly precipitated by it into an eternal, unchangeable state, you, I trust, will show yourselves true friends to your country by bearing your testimony, and exerting your influence against sin, the procuring cause of all our sorrows, and, by standing in the breach, and pleading with God for mercy in behalf of yourselves and of the nation. If ten persons, thus disposed, had been found even in Sodom, it would have escaped destruction (Gen. xviii. 32).

IV. There may be some persons in this assembly who are little concerned for their own sins, and are of course incapable of taking a proper part in the service of the day. Yet I am glad that you are here; I pity you, I warn you. If you should live to see a time of public distress, what will you do? To whom will you look, or whither will you flee for help? All that is dear to you may be torn from you, or you from it. Or, if it please God to prolong your tranquility, you are liable to many heavy calamities in private life. And if you should be exempted from these, death is inevitable, and may be near. My heart wishes you the possession of those principles which would support you in all the

changes of life, and make your dying pillow comfortable. Are you unwilling to be happy? or can you be happy too soon? Many persons are now looking upon you, who once were as you are now. And I doubt not, they are praying that you may be as they now are. Try to pray for yourself; our God is assuredly in the midst of us. His gracious ear is attentive to every supplicant. Seek Him while He is to be found. Jesus died for sinners, and He has said, Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out (John vi. 37). He is likewise the Author of that faith, by which alone you can come rightly to Him. If you ask it of Him, He will give it you; if you seek it in the means of His appointment, you shall assuredly find (Matt. vii. 7). If you refuse this, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin (Heb. x. 22, 27). If you are not saved by faith in His blood, you are lost for ever. O kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, if His wrath be kindled, yea but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him (Psalm ii. 12).

A DANGER TO BE AVOIDED.

A CHOICE criticism by C. H. Spurgeon in a sermon preached in 1875 :

“ Another class has lately arisen who preach experience, but theirs is always upon the high key. They soar aloft, as I think, a little in the balloon line. They own only the bright side of experience, they have nothing to do with its darkness and death. For them there are no nights, they sing through perpetual summer days. They have conquered sin, and they have ignored themselves. *So they say*, but we should not have thought so if they had not told us so; on the contrary, we might have fancied that they had a very vivid idea of themselves and their own attainments. I hope I am mistaken, but it has appeared to some of us poor fallible beings that in some beloved brethren self had grown marvellously big of late; certainly their conventions and preachings largely consist of very wonderful declarations of their own admirable condition. I should be pleased to learn of their progress in grace, *if it be real*; but I had sooner have made the discovery myself, or have heard it from somebody else besides themselves, for there is an inspired proverb which says, ‘ Let another praise thee, and not thine own lips,’ and, for my part, if any other man thought it right to praise me, I would rather that he held his tongue, for man-magnifying is a poor business. Let the Lord alone be magnified. I think it is clear that grave faults arise, one of exclusively preaching an inner life, instead of preaching Christ, Who is the life itself.”—From *Our Outlook*.

Our Young Folks' Page.

THE TWO BIBLES.

MANY people in England will have reason to remember this year for the great floods, which swamped a large part of the country at the end of a long and difficult winter. But I have been reading of a flood in a Yorkshire village which caused a great deal of damage in the middle of summer. It was in the year 1872; the village was a pleasant little place situated in a valley surrounded by hills more than eight hundred feet high. One day there was a tremendous rainstorm of most unusual violence. All the hill roads leading into the village were turned into rushing streams, which poured into the valley, laden with rocks and stones and bushes uprooted by the torrent. The little river overflowed everywhere, and many houses were in great peril.

In one house the family retreated to the bedrooms upstairs, and watched the rising waters. All sorts of things were being swept by them under the windows, and amongst them the watchers saw with a good deal of curiosity a large open book being borne along by the flood. It was being washed to and fro, still lying open, and at length it was floated close to the bedroom window, so near that the people in the room could easily recognise it for a Bible. The Book was kept close within their view just long enough for them to read these verses: "But if ye will not hearken unto Me and will not do all these commandments, and if ye shall despise My statutes, or if your soul abhor My judgments, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but that ye break My covenant; I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart." These words were all that the watchers could read before the Bible was floated onwards out of sight. But they came with great power to the consciences of the imprisoned owners of the house; for they knew well enough that they had despised God's statutes and disobeyed His commandments, and now they felt that His terror was upon them. They fully expected to be drowned in the overwhelming waters; but God in His mercy delivered them, the flood falling before the house was submerged. Whether they listened still to the voice of conscience when they found themselves safe, I do not know; but they were greatly impressed by the solemn warning.

In another cottage lived an old couple who hastened to barricade themselves from the oncoming flood. But it was soon evident that the waters could not be kept out of the house, and the old people began hastily to drag the things they valued most up to the bedroom above.

A man who came in to help stood in the downstairs room handing the things up to the old man on the stairs; but before long the water was getting near his shoulders, and he was obliged to hasten to the upper room. As the husband and wife looked round on the odd collection of things which had been dumped in the bedroom, they soon saw that their most valued treasure had been forgotten. The old couple were sincere Christians, to whom the Word of God was very precious; and the missing treasure was a large family Bible, which they always kept open and ready for frequent use on a little stand of its own. This copy was peculiarly dear to them, for in it they had recorded the births of all their children, and the deaths of all but one. It seemed to be bound up with their lives, and they were full of lamentation over its loss. Even if the water subsided, they feared the Book would be ruined by the soaking mud. It was a great blow, felt much more by the old man and woman than their own danger or the damage to their home.

The flood continued to rise until it was within six inches of the ceiling. Then it gradually fell, till at last the old people were able to come part-way down the stairs to see how things were. The first sight that met their eyes was the great Bible, floating about gently on its stand in the middle of the room, perfectly dry and unharmed! With what joy and thankfulness they received their treasure again! Poor as they were, the damage done to their few possessions had made them almost destitute; but the recovery of the precious Bible seemed to make up for all their losses. When a relief fund was opened, help came to the poor old couple; but grateful though they were for the kindness that they received, they were always praising God chiefly for the way He had preserved their most precious treasure.

Two open Bibles floating on the flood! I wonder if they have a message for us. Are we amongst those whose consciences have been awakened by the solemn warnings of the Word of God? The other day, when I was riding in a bus through the centre of the town, we passed a man holding up a large placard; and I heard a girl's voice from a few seats behind me reading out the words. "Be sure your sins will find you out," she read, and she and her girl friend giggled. It gave me such a pang, for what a fearful thing it is to fall unheeding into the hands of the living God! The girl's amusement may have arisen not so much from lack of reverence as from ignorance; perhaps she did not know the words were the words of God. I heard of a girl with a secondary school education who wanted to look up something about Abraham in order to fill in a cross-word clue; she told her mother that neither she nor any of the other clerks in the large office knew in what part of the Bible to look! What a great mercy it is when the open Bible is a precious treasure to our souls; for all its pages point to Christ, the only Saviour of lost sinners, the only Hope of despairing men.

—DAMARIS.

Protestant Beacon.

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK ON MIXED MARRIAGES.

"THE TIMES" of October 17th, 1946, had the following report of the Archbishop of York's statement on Mixed Marriages:—

The Archbishop of York, in his presidential address to the Full Synod of the Convocation of York yesterday, issued a warning to Anglicans contemplating marriage with a Roman Catholic against "signing away their rights over possible children."

Dr. Garbett said he was frequently asked for advice on the conditions imposed by the Roman Catholic Church before one of its members could marry an Anglican or any other Christian who did not belong to that Church. A mixed marriage of this nature must be taken in the presence of a Roman Catholic priest if it were to be recognised as valid by that Church, and this was permitted only after consent had been given by both parties to the following conditions: First, both sign a document in which they "solemnly promise and engage that all the children, of both sexes, who may be born of our marriage, shall be baptised in the Catholic Church, and shall be carefully brought up in the knowledge and practice of the Catholic Religion." Secondly, the non-Roman Catholic party solemnly promised "that I will not interfere with the religious belief of my future husband or wife and that I will allow him or her full and perfect liberty to fulfil all his or her duties as a member of the Catholic Religion." On the other side of this document there was printed the request from the parish priest for a dispensation to allow this marriage. This was in Latin, and it restated not only that the above-mentioned pledges had been given, but in addition—and this was not always known—that the Roman Catholic promises to do all within his or her power to induce the other party to embrace the true faith: *promittit pars catholica, se omni quo potest modo conaturam, ut induceretur pars altera ad veram fidem amplectendam.*

"I feel it necessary," the Archbishop continued, "to warn Anglicans against signing this document, and to ask them to do their utmost to dissuade members of our Church from doing so. It means that while freedom is secured to the Roman Catholic it is denied to the Anglican. It means that Anglican fathers or mothers married to Roman Catholics are deprived of the right to influence the spiritual and religious upbringing of their children. It means disloyalty to the Church of their baptism and of their fathers. It is a humiliating condition asked of the Anglican before marriage with a Roman Catholic. I have known many cases where the Anglican has stood firm and refused to give this pledge, and either the Roman Catholic authorities have not insisted upon it, or, more frequently, the marriage has been taken in one of our churches."

In conclusion, Dr. Garbett said that neither Anglican nor Roman Catholic should be intimidated by any warnings or threats that a mixed marriage in one of our churches would be invalid; it would not indeed

be recognised by the Roman Catholic Church, but it would be a marriage in the sight of God and in accordance with the laws both of the Church and the State of this realm. He had quoted the actual terms used in the promise: "Catholic Church," "Catholic Religion." In the context they were obviously intended to mean the "Roman Catholic Church" and the "Roman Catholic Religion," for the Church of England was the historic Catholic Church of this land, and its religion was that of the "holy Catholic Church" in which its members proclaim their belief whenever they say the Creeds.

THE WATER OF LIFE.

IF Hagar had known that she was a type of the law, she would have expected the water in the bottle to fail. The law makes nothing perfect, a living hope only does that. But the inadequate supply was gone and she was hopeless. She cast her son down under a bush to gasp his life away. She herself sat down a good way off "as it were a bowshot." She could not bear to see him die. There she wept. "The Lord heard the voice of the lad." The little archer—the archer to be—had released an arrow which reached heaven. His need and weakness directed it, and God spoke and revealed life. He showed Hagar a well of water, living water indeed to the perishing pair, "and God was with the lad."

Some eighty years after (two generations), the gentle Joseph was lowered into a pit. The pit was empty, there was no water in it. It lacked that emblem of continuance, but the promise was inviolable, and God caused a small stream of brotherly kindness to rise in Reuben's heart, and they took Joseph out of the pit.

There was no water for the people to drink in the wilderness, but a stream from the rock followed them all the way to the Promised Land.

There was no water for Samson to refresh himself with, after he had slain heaps upon heaps of Israel's foes. He said, with the Psalmist, "Save me, oh my God, for Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone." Or he felt like Achsah, "Thou hast given me a south land, give me also springs of water." Do we not often need something *else* to be done for us, a second deliverance to establish a first?

On my Lord's Day morning walk, to join a feeble remnant, I pass a fountain built into the wall of an almshouse. The water used to run without stopping, for any or everyone who wanted to have it. There was a pool below for dogs. But they have stopped the flow. The children may clank empty cans (like the little ones in Jeremiah xiv. 2), but noise is the only result. The dogs sniff in vain, as if neither church nor world is to be refreshed by a free fountain of water.

The poor Samaritan woman trudged to and fro for a supply that perished with the day, but the Lord brought her to the streams of that river that make glad the city of God. John saw this river in the light of God, and the Spirit says "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

—FOLLOWER-ON.

GLADNESS AT THE SIGHT.

"THEN were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." These words describe the feelings of many of the disciples on the evening of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. It had been a remarkable day. Early in the morning some godly women had discovered that the tomb was empty. The body of Jesus was no longer there. At various times in the day Jesus had appeared to one or more of His disciples. He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. Then He appeared to several of the women as they were returning from the sepulchre. Later, He walked and talked with two of the disciples as they journeyed to a village called Emmaus. At some other part of the day He appeared specially to Simon Peter. Now the evening of that eventful day has come, and the disciples had assembled together behind closed doors, the fear of the Jews having taken possession of their hearts. Judas was no longer numbered with them. Thomas, for some unexplained reason, was absent. The remaining ten Apostles, however, were present and "them that were with them." Probably the godly women were in the company. The two disciples who had walked to Emmaus had also joined the company, and when they entered the room they heard the company saying one to another, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." Then the two who had returned from Emmaus related their remarkable experience, and as they did so, "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." "And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Their previous sorrow was turned into joy. The sight of the risen Jesus brought gladness to their hearts. They were convinced that He had risen from the dead. Peter had seen Him. Mary Magdalene had seen Him. Several of the woman had seen Him. Those two sorrowing disciples in the memorable walk to Emmaus had seen Him. Now the whole company of the disciples, gathered together in Jerusalem, saw Him standing before them. They saw His pierced hands and His pierced feet. They saw His side which had been pierced by the spear of the Roman soldier. They heard His voice. He ate in their presence. He bade them handle Him, and see, "for," He said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." There He was standing in their presence. The very same Jesus Who was crucified, dead and buried, was now alive and conversing with them. No wonder that they were glad now that they saw their risen and living Lord. They had trusted that He would be the Redeemer of Israel. They had believed that the prophecies in reference to His Messianic reign would be fulfilled. His unexpected death, however, had shattered their hopes. It seemed to suggest that after all He was not what He professed to be. Now, however, a stupendous event has taken place. He had risen from the tomb. He was alive, and their hopes revive and their hearts are glad-

dened. Probably they did not at first realise all that the prophecies concerning Him meant, and all that His resurrection meant, but He hastened to unfold to them the full meaning of their ancient Scriptures. "These," He said, "are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." All the ancient Scriptures had foretold the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. These Scriptures were prophetic. The holy men of God who had written them wrote as they were moved by God the Holy Ghost. The death and the resurrection of Christ were foretold in these Scriptures. The great events which had so unexpectedly happened were really according to Divine plan and purpose, and the great Gospel announcement of remission of sins, which was to be preached among all nations, was to be based on the great truths of Christ's death and resurrection from the dead on the third day.

The disciples gathered together on the evening of our Lord's resurrection, had a privilege which is denied to the disciples of to-day. We have not seen the face of our risen Lord. We have not seen the hands, the feet and the side which were pierced for us. Yet He is precious to us. Though we have not seen Him we love Him, and though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. We know that He was manifested to take away our sins. We know that He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and that with His stripes we are healed. We know that He loved us and gave Himself for us, and our hearts are glad as we realise by faith that He was not only delivered on account of our offences, but that He was raised again on account of our justification. We are glad because we know that His resurrection proves that He had fully exhausted the penalty due to our sins. Death could no longer hold our Surety, seeing that He had met fully all the preceptive and penal claims of the law for us for whom He stood. Moreover, we are glad because we know that His resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection of His people to heavenly glory and blessedness. "Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." Now at this time are the disciples glad when by faith they see their risen, ascended and glorified Lord. We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour.

The very same Jesus, however, Who rose from the dead, and Who subsequently ascended into heaven, and took His seat on the right hand of the Father, is coming back again. "Behold," says the Apostle John, "He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him." For

the return of the risen and glorified Lord all His people are waiting. They "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." He Who rose and ascended "shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." Then they that are His shall be raised incorruptible and we who are alive shall be changed. Then we shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. We, too, shall then see the Lord. "When He shall appear we shall see Him as He is." The patriarch Job looked forward to that day. "I know," he said, "that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. . . . In my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself." David looked forward to that day. He said, "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness." Old Testament saints and New Testament saints will behold the face of Him Who loved them and washed them from their sins in His Own blood. They will be glad when they see the Lord. When His glory shall be revealed they shall be glad also with exceeding joy. When they see Him, they will say, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: This is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

CHRISTIAN CIVILISATION IN PERIL.

IN a letter to *The Times* of January 20th, 1947, Prof. Gilbert Murray, in reference to the proposals for a United Europe, referred to Christian civilisation as being in "extreme peril." He said:

Secondly, there is such a thing as Christian civilisation. I do not refer to doctrine. I mean the civilisation of the great nations that in the mass call themselves Christian. A short time ago it represented an unquestioned ethical ideal. The Christian nations, both in strength and in thought, were leaders of the world. The prestige of Christendom was supreme. Now, owing to the rise of Nazi and Marxist ideologies in Europe and the challenge of vast non-Christian nations in Asia, still more owing to the self-destruction of Christian nations themselves, civilisation is in extreme peril. It must be saved. Of course, it will be difficult. It cannot be saved without a great spiritual effort, the sort of effort demanded by Mr. Churchill in his famous appeal to the students at Zürich. It needs a strong effort of magnanimous forgiveness, a still stronger effort of splendid remembrance. It needs some approach to the spirit of Renan's great appeal in the war of 1870—that France,

the intellectual leader of Europe, should say to Germany, "I your enemy? No, I am your sister."

If we understand him rightly, he thinks that "the civilisation of the great nations that in the mass call themselves Christian" is in danger of ceasing to exist. The principles which have exercised a civilising influence on the great nations which have been professedly Christian are in danger of being abandoned. This seems to be an unconscious acknowledgement of the prophetic teaching of the New Testament.

Our Lord suggests that in the day when He is revealed the moral condition of the world will be similar to the evil condition of the world in the time of Noah, and similar to the moral condition of Sodom in the days of Lot (Luke xvii. 26-30). The Apostle Paul says, "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (II. Timothy iii. 1-5).

If we pause and carefully note the various items describing the character of the last days, must we not admit that in large measure these things exist now? Are not the professedly Christian nations, our own included, abandoning in an increasing degree those moral principles which in years gone by were held in reverence by professedly Christian nations?

The Apostle Paul concludes his enumeration of the evils of the last days by saying, "*From such turn away.*" Surely the hearts of Christian people must be solemnised as they see these developments of evil in our own and other nations, and should we not be led to humble ourselves before God as we notice how sin is abounding on every hand? Then should we not cry mightily unto God for His mercy and His delivering power? It should surely also be our earnest prayer that we who, through distinguishing grace, are numbered amongst His people, may be enabled by His grace to walk more worthily of the vocation wherewith we are called, and to deny more fully ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live more soberly, righteously and godly, while looking for that blessed hope and the appeasing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There can be no doubt that apostasy from the great truths formerly held dear is increasing in Christendom, and that departure from the great moral standards is becoming increasingly evident. May all His true people give themselves to prayer and tremble at His Word.

PARENTAL DISCIPLINE.

OUR own beloved mother could usually control any one of her children (there were thirteen!) with one look, either of displeasure or of grief mingled with love; or else with a few serious words of kindly exhortation. We never remember her correcting any of us in anger. The present-day "liberty" accorded to children, and the evil influence of school life (with some worthy exceptions) inciting insubmission to parental control, is becoming a serious menace. Juvenile delinquency causes magistrates in many places serious concern, and it is traced largely to freedom to visit the horrible shows in picture houses and other places of amusements; and to liberty to mix with other children of careless parents. Undoubtedly, weak yielding of parents contributes in no small degree to the degeneration of youthful behaviour so sadly evident. We have been sometimes challenged with the suggestion that, having no children, we are not competent to speak on such a subject. Our reply is: We once knew what it was to be a child. Deeply do we sympathise with godly parents. Their best course is to pray for strength, wisdom, and grace to deal with their beloved offspring in a Scriptural manner. This we firmly believe was the secret of our parent's successful administration of home discipline. And by example and precept she always inculcated due respect for elders and superiors, and courtesy for all—features sadly lacking in present-day manners, even among the better educated.—(Editor of *Friendly Companion*).

ANXIETY.

"IN nothing be anxious" (Phil. iv. 6, R.V.). Worrying is as definitely forbidden as theft. This needs to be carefully pondered and definitely realised by us, so that we do not excuse it as an innocent "infirmity." The more we are convicted of the sinfulness of anxiety, the sooner are we likely to perceive that it is most dishonouring to God, and "strive against" (Heb. xii. 4) it. But *how* are we to "strive against" it? First, by begging the Holy Spirit to grant us a deeper conviction of its enormity. Second, by making it a subject of special and earnest prayer, that we may be delivered from this evil. Third, by watching its beginnings, and as soon as we are conscious of harassment of mind, as soon as we detect the unbelieving thought, lift up our heart to God and ask Him for deliverance from it.

The best antidote for anxiety is frequent meditation upon God's goodness, power and sufficiency. When the saint can confidently realise "The Lord is my Shepherd," he must draw the conclusion, "I shall not want!" Immediately following our exhortation is, "but in *everything* by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Nothing is too big and nothing is too little to spread before and cast upon the Lord.

A.W.P.

THE NAME OF GOD AND THE PRESS.

THE late Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr. Temple) preached on a bombed site opposite St. Stephen's Church, Walbrook, London, at a special service in connection with "The City for God" campaign, on September 5th, 1944. In the course of his sermon he said that he thought "that one reason why the Church failed to get its message over was that the newspapers commonly cut out from reports any sentences that contained the name of God. This was a very widespread attitude. In all the reports of his recent broadcast that he had seen the newspapers had cut out all the references he had made to God and reported everything that could have been said by any heathen."—*The Times*, Sept. 6th, 1944.

ENRICHED BY HIM

(*I. Corinthians i. 5*).

Enriched by Christ, there is for me a love
That never can be fathomed. Life there is
That cannot die. A righteousness I have
That cannot tarnished be. A peace there is
Not to be understood. My settled rest
No thing created ever can disturb.
My joy can never be diminished here;
Nor can my hope a disappointment know.
I have a glory that can know no cloud,
A light undarkened, and a happiness
That can no settled interruption feel.
My strength in Christ may not enfeebled be;
In Him my purity is not defiled,
And in His beauty is not any mar.
Unbaffled is the wisdom He bestows;
Exhaustless are resources I enjoy.

T. PITTAWAY.

Rodden Rectory,
Frome, Somerset.

Reviews and Notices of Books.

"THANKSGIVING SERVICES AT ZOAR PARTICULAR BAPTIST CHAPEL, BRADFORD, YORKS." Pp. 32. Price 2s. 6d., post free (C. J. Farncombe & Sons, Ltd., 56, South End, Croydon, Surrey; or Mr. W. B. Griffith Vaughan, "The Shrubberies," Baildon Road, Baildon, Yorks.).

THIS is an attractively-got-up account of special thanksgiving services at Zoar Particular Baptist Chapel, Bradford, Yorks., held on Saturday, May 4th, and Lord's Day, May 5th, 1946. Ten pages are occupied with illustrations including portraits of three of the Pastors.

EDITORIAL.

Received by the Editor, with many thanks: Miss R. Cowell; Mr. W. F. Goodchild; Mr. F. Jarman; Mrs. D. Wakeley; Mr. J. G. Wild; Miss J. Alexander; Dr. L. M. Houghton.

EXTRACTS FROM OUR CORRESPONDENCE.

From Brighton: "We do not remember the time when the *Gospel Magazine* was not regularly taken and read in our home."

From London: "May I say how greatly I value the clear and distinctive testimony of the *Gospel Magazine*, and how thankful I am that you are now enabled to publish it every month."

From Wallington: "I am pleased you still contend for a full and free Gospel, without money and price. 'For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.'"

GOspel MAGAZINE FUND.

The Trustees of "The Gospel Magazine" gratefully acknowledge the receipt of the following donations to the Fund: In memory of "M" £1; Mr. R. J. Bowtell 14/-; Mr. J. Cutler £1 1s.; Miss E. Skull 3/-; Mr. G. A. Gandy 3/-; Miss R. D. Temple 10/6; Mr. A. W. Britton (per Miss L. Ormiston) 3/-; Mr. J. Wild 14/-; Mr. T. Slater 3/-; Miss A. Parkinson £2.

THE POOR CHRISTIANS' HELP SOCIETY. Under circumstances of special gravity and pressing need, we turn to our kind supporters, and to others who have not previously helped us, for a special effort on behalf of our poor friends, who during this dreadful War are placed in a much more trying position than usual. We have about 125 of them on our books. They have so much appreciated your kind help in former years, and we plead for the necessary means to cheer and comfort their hearts and confirm them in the faithfulness of their Covenant God. **THE COMMITTEE.** Hon. Sec., A. C. LEWIN, The Manse, High Street, Evington, Leicester.

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