

# **OCCASIONAL PAPERS**

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Occasional Papers by C. H. M.

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BY

C. H. M.

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"Feed the flock of God."—1 Pet. v. 2.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE title of this little volume so exactly expresses what the reader is to expect therein, that little is needed in the way of preface. However, it may be well to state that some of the following papers appeared many years ago in periodicals which are now out of print. Others appeared more recently in a separate form. The publisher requested permission to publish all in one volume; and the writer, seeing no just ground for refusing, gave his consent. May the Lord affix the seal of His approval! Nothing less will do; nothing more is needed.

C. H. M.

26, PORTLAND SQUARE, BRISTOL,  
*November, 1867.*





## OCCASIONAL PAPERS.

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### THE PRISONER OF HOPE.

Zechariah ix. 12.

THERE are two leading principles in the soul of the Christian, which make God the special object. These are "faith and hope." There is a marked distinction, and yet an intimate connection, between these two principles. Faith takes what God has given; hope expects what He has promised. Faith rests in holy tranquillity in God's statements about the *past*; hope goes forth in active longings after the *future*. Faith is a recipient; hope an expectant. Now, it will be found that, in proportion to the vigour of faith, will be the vigour of hope. If we be not "fully persuaded that what God has promised, He is able also to perform," we shall know but little of the power or energy of hope. If faith be wavering, hope will be flickering. On the contrary, if faith be strong, hope will be strong also; for faith, while it nourishes and strengthens the persuasion, imparts strength and intensity to the expectation. Thus, the soul, in the happy exercise of the above principles, is like a climbing plant which, striking *its roots downward into the soil, sends forth its*

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tendrils along the nearest wall or tree. So the soul finds its root in the eternal record of God, while it sends forth the tendrils of an imperishable hope to grasp tenaciously the faithful promise of God ; and, we may say, the deeper the root, the stronger the tendril.

The patriarch Abraham was a happy exemplification of all this ; his "faith and hope" were truly "in God." Circumstances added nothing to him. He had been promised the whole land of Canaan, where he had not so much as to set his foot on ; he had been promised a seed like the stars of heaven, or like the sand by the sea shore, when as yet he had no child. Thus, neither his faith nor his hope could have drawn any nutriment from circumstances, for everything within the range of mortal vision argued against him. But the promise of "the Almighty God" was quite enough for the man of faith. With nought but that, he started forth as a pilgrim and a stranger, having no foundation for his hopes that could at all be recognised by "flesh and blood." Abraham had heard a voice which the children of this world could not hear, even the voice of "the God of glory," calling him forth from the midst of his worldly circumstances to be "a prisoner of hope." The Lord had directed his thoughts upward—He had called him from earth to heaven—from the earthly Babel to the heavenly *Jerusalem*—from the baseless city of man, to the *well-founded city of God*.

Thus was it with all the patriarchs and witnesses whose honoured names the Spirit has recorded, for our encouragement, in Hebrews xi. "They all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They died as they had lived, "prisoners of hope." An unbelieving world might scoff and sneer at them, and wonder why they had given up the apparently substantial realities of earth to live and die without anything. But their "faith and hope" were in God, and not in circumstances. Faith enabled them to rest with tranquillized spirits upon the record of God, while hope carried them onward into the future, and converted it into the present.

But the verse which stands at the head of this paper presents the believer in two most interesting aspects, viz., as the recipient of *grace*, and the expectant of *glory*—as one safely lodged in a "stronghold," but yet as "a prisoner of hope"—as one in the enjoyment of perfect peace, and also living in the blessed hope of better things. These two points may afford matter for profitable reflection, through the Lord's mercy.

There is only one thing that can render the soul happy in looking forward into the future, and that is, the knowledge of God's redeeming love in giving His Son to be a perfect sacrifice for sin. Until this is known, the mind will never reach beyond the question of mere individual