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VOL. VI.

LONDON: JAMES CARTER,
THE CLARENDON TRACT DEPOT,
ALDINE CHAMBERS, 13 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1904.



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The Christian's Library.

Hints on Ezekiel.

VISIONS OF GOD.

EZEKIEL is one of the three prophets of the captivity period. Jeremiah was left to prophesy to the poor of God's people in the land of Judæa; Daniel was taken to Babylon, where he came into special contact with the Gentile powers, under whose dominion the Jewish people for the time were placed; whereas Ezekiel was "among the captives by the river of Chebar" in the land of the Chaldeans.

"In the thirtieth year" (chap. i. 1). This evidently marks an important era in the history of Israel. The people, led away by the iniquity of their kings, had filled even Jerusalem with idolatry, witchcraft, corruption, and violence (see 2 Kings xxi.-xxiv.), and that to such an extent that Mount Zion, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth" (Ps. xlviii.), had become in God's sight a "mount of corruption" (2 Kings xxiii. 13). But Jehovah, ever faithful, had wrought a marvellous revival during the

reign of Josiah. This youthful monarch had early turned his heart to do that which was right in the sight of the Lord, "for in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young"—he was only sixteen years of age—"he began to seek after the God of David his father" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 2). His next step was, in the twelfth year of his reign, to begin "to purge Judah and Jerusalem" from their many idols.

Six years afterwards, when this cleansing work was completed, he began "to repair the house of the Lord his God." It was during this process that the book of the law of the Lord given by Moses was recovered from the rubbish. The reading of this book led the king to humble himself before the Lord; "It came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 19). This was no vague and unintelligent confession of sin, but a direct and definite acknowledgment that "great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book" (ver. 21). The evil is traced to its true source, and the hand of the Lord is owned with genuine sorrow and shame. Oh, for somewhat of this spirit amongst the people of God to-day who find themselves amidst far greater ruins, because the ruins of a better thing! For is not the Church of God, with its heavenly calling, better than the earthly kingdom?

“God having provided some better thing for us” (Heb. xi. 40).

Josiah determines to shape his course according to those living oracles, and that in spite of the reiterated threatenings of divine judgment, “Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah” (ver. 24). Josiah might have reasoned that there was no use to try and walk acceptably in the sight of the Lord, that the day had gone by for faithfulness of that kind, that obedience to the law was impossible, or at any rate was useless, that the judgment must come, and that he could not prevent it. Even so does unbelief reason to-day. If the Church is in ruins, if apostasy is at hand, if God has Himself declared that things will wax worse and worse, what is the good of trying to conform our ways to the Word of God? This is the language of unbelief; but the path of individual faith is the path of individual obedience, and that no matter what the general state of things may be.

And see what was the mighty effect of one man's energy of obedient faith! “Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great

and small : and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Israel took away all the abominations (*i.e.* idols) out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 29-33).

Not only this, but "Josiah kept a passover unto the Lord in Jerusalem. . . . And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet ; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (2 Chron. xxxv. 1, 18).

No wonder, then, that this epoch of revival and blessing should have been marked in the history of Israel. Ezekiel's prophecy takes its start in the thirtieth year from that very period.

But sorrowful is it to have to add that "the thirtieth year" was also "the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity." The judgments threatened in the law of Moses, and repeated through the lips of Huldah, the prophetess, in the days of Josiah, had now begun to fall, and yet the Lord did not leave Himself without witness even in the land of Chaldea. "The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God," says the captive, by the river Chebar.

Prophecy always marks a time of declension amongst the people of God. It speaks both of judgment and of mercy—judgment because of sin and failure on the part of man, mercy because of God's faithfulness to His word and promise. If there were no departure from God on the part of His people, there would be no need for the warnings of impending judgment on the one hand, nor on the other for promises of final blessing and restoration at a future if far-distant day.

Ezekiel appears to have been carried captive from Judæa to Chaldea in one of the earlier deportations of the people, probably at the time of Jehoiachin's captivity. The recovery during the reign of Josiah proved but temporary, and of each king that followed it is recorded that he did "that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." Judgment, God's strange work, then begins to fall, not all at once in its completeness, but slowly and by degrees. Jehoiachin is carried captive, but the king of Babylon places Zedekiah

on the throne of Jerusalem. "The mighty of the land" (2 Kings xxiv. 15), amongst whom must be placed the prophet of Chebar, were carried away, and only "the poorest sort of the people of the land" had been left behind in Judæa; and did they repent of their sin? Time had been given for this, but without avail. The judgment fallen upon Jehoiachin had no deterring influence with Zedekiah; the tears and entreaties with which Jeremiah bore testimony to him and the people left in the land were unheeded, for "neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which He spake by the prophet Jeremiah" (Jer. xxxvii. 2). Yes, they were God's words in the prophet's mouth; it was God speaking through human lips.

But the iniquity of the people had increased until there was no remedy, for not only the king, but now even "all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought

upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age: He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah," &c. (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14-21).

The judgment here depicted had not been executed in its entirety when the "visions of God" began to unroll themselves before the eyes of Ezekiel; but these were the immediate circumstances which gave rise to the remarkable predictions that follow, which stretched far away beyond the prophet's time, to a period yet future, though possibly now very near at hand, when judgment shall have done its work not only upon the Jewish people, but upon the Gentile nations as well. Then will God work in restoring grace for Israel's restoration and blessing in their own land; then will the glory of the God of Israel

once more return to His land and temple, and the earth shall shine with His glory (Ezek. xliii. 2). The Lo-ammi (not My people) of Israel's present desolation, will then be exchanged for the Jehovah-Shammah (the Lord is there) of millennial beauty (xlviii. 35).

Then will be fulfilled the Psalmist's joyous and glorious words: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the Great King" (Ps. xlviii. 1, 2).



The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."—HEB. iv. 14.

IN a day like this, when the authority of Scripture is either questioned or not listened to, and error abounds on almost every hand, it is impossible that believers can overrate the value of acquaintance with the truth of God's present order of Priesthood.

Like many other parts of divine teaching, it has been greatly lost sight of, because a false

order of things has usurped its place. But the knowledge and enjoyment of Priesthood according to God greatly sustains our hearts, as well as draws us out into the most precious exercises of communion and worship; though no doubt Satan and men have sadly corrupted the truth in order to damage souls and dishonour the Lord Jesus, and thus rapidly bring about that condition of things which we know will end in apostasy and judgment.

On turning to the eleventh verse of Jude's epistle, we perceive three principal ways in which men and Satan are acting so as to bring about that character of false profession which will end in judgment, and in the professing Church being spued out of Christ's mouth. (See Jude 14, 15, and Rev. iii. 16.) We read, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam, and perished in the gainsaying of Core." Thus we have *Cain's way*, *Balaam's error*, and *Korah's gainsaying*, characterising people professing Christianity.

"The way of Cain" was religiousness without the sacrifice of a life; "the error of Balaam," ministering in divine things for reward; and "the gainsaying of Korah,"* the despising of God's order of priesthood, and setting up a false one. Now, if you look around, you can scarcely fail to see that the three characteristics of Christianity which have been, and still are

being attacked by the enemy, are the infinite value of the one sacrifice of Christ, the divine order of ministry by gifts bestowed by Christ in heaven, and the present divine order of priesthood sought to be supplanted by another of human appointment.

The Gainsaying of Core.

This warning voice of Scripture therefore as to "the gainsaying of Core" is most solemn, and shows that a true acquaintance with God's present order of priesthood is one of the ways of escaping Satan's wiles, and of living and acting more according to God's mind. On turning to the sixteenth chapter of Numbers, we find that "the gainsaying of Core" was not an effort to set aside priesthood altogether, but to supplant God's order by a false one; and we know how summary and severe the judgment of God was upon them for it. May we know God's mind about this!

It is quite true that God had an order of priesthood in the past dispensation; but it was earthly in its character, that is, for service on earth, and successional; though it was divine in its appointment. It consisted of Aaron and his sons, which in some respects, as we shall see, remarkably shadowed forth God's present order of priesthood, which is divine in its appointment too, but heavenly, and not successional. It consists of Jesus, the Son of God, gone into

heaven itself—THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST, and those who believe in Him who are PRIESTS—an holy priesthood and a royal priesthood (1 Pet. ii. 5).

The Great High Priest.

It is an inquiry into Scripture teaching on the priesthood of Jesus, the Son of God, which we now propose to enter upon; and may God help us by His Spirit to approach this glorious subject with that reverence and godly fear which it demands.

In the fourth chapter of Hebrews, the priesthood of Jesus, the Son of God, is presented to us in connection with the sharp and powerful searching of the *Word of God*, by which the thoughts and intents of the heart are discerned. The great High Priest is therefore introduced to us there to sustain and comfort us before God as His creatures, while conscious of infirmities under the scrutinising power of His written Word (Heb. iv. 12-16).

In the eighth chapter of Hebrews, our High Priest is brought before us in relation to *the throne of God*—"set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Not only does He hold the highest place, but is *seated* there, because He hath perfected us for ever by His one offering. Now, how could we think of approaching God's throne, unless we knew One was there who had glorified God in the accomplishment of our redemption? (Heb. viii. 1.)

In the tenth chapter of Hebrews, priesthood is again set forth concerning our being in *the presence of God*, our entering into the holiest. This is therefore specially connected with communion and worship. Thus "Jesus, the Son of God who is passed into the heavens," is presented as a "High Priest," which "we have" when exposed to the searching qualities of "*the word of God*," when thinking of the infinitely holy claims of *the throne of God*, or entering into the holiest, *the presence of God*.

But observe the greatness of this Person. He is called a great High Priest, and He is declared to be Jesus, the Son of God. The eternal Son surely, and yet perfect Man, and gone into the very glory of God — "passed through the heavens" —

"Who knows what sore temptations are,
For He has felt the same."

Perfect Man, made of a woman, who completely did the will of Him that sent Him; yet no less God, the eternal Son, who had glory with the Father before the world was; for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." What infinite glory, perfection, almightiness, and everlastingness therefore are in Him! What a Priest! How transcendently glorious is He! How the glory of a fallible, earthly, mortal priesthood, though in a former dispensation of divine institution, fades away before the eternal excellency of our great High Priest!

Interceding for Believers.

Before entering further on the contemplation of this blessed Person and His precious ministry, there are some erroneous thoughts current among Christians which call for a few remarks. The common idea that Christ is now interceding in heaven for everybody, is entirely without Scripture authority. No doubt He is the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus ; but mediation or standing between God and men for a time to avert the blow of divine vengeance, is very different from the activity of a heart going out in deepest interest toward God for blessing on the objects of His love, who have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Was Aaron a high priest for any but those who were standing in relationship with God, a people who had been delivered from judgment by the blood of the Lamb? Again, did not our Lord say, "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine"? (John xvii.) On this point Hebrews vii. 25 is also very clear, for it clearly states for whom Jesus is interceding. We are told it is for "them that come unto God by Him," which certainly includes all believers on Him, and excludes all others.

It is really unaccountable how Christian people have picked up the idea, that Christ is a High Priest and Intercessor for all men. But how

precious is the fact that Christ sends the gospel to every creature, and that His heart in heaven is ever going forth in loving ministry on the behalf of those that believe ; and about this there can be no doubt, because such "come unto God by Him." Oh, the unutterable preciousness of this truth ! An honoured servant of the Lord once said, "If I heard Christ interceding for me in the next room, how happy it would make me ! But distance makes no difference." Let us, then, dear Christian reader, lift up our hearts with joy and thanksgiving for the precious fact, that the heart of Christ on high, who ever liveth, is ever active in loving ministry on our behalf.

There are some who speak of Christ's intercessory work in heaven as necessary to appease God's anger lest it should break loose upon us, and some who have received this error actually call on the Lord Jesus to pray for them. Such, however, have greatly mistaken God's mind on the matter. The *truth* is that the same grace that moved the heart of God to give His only begotten Son, to deliver Him up for our offences to the death of the cross, also appointed Him to the work of the priesthood. We are told that "Christ glorified not Himself to be made a priest," and also that "the Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. v. 5, vii. 21).

Again, it is thought by not a few that it is by Christ's sacrifice and priesthood put together

that we are saved. If this were the case, then neither His work on the cross as Sacrifice was perfect, nor His work on the throne as Priest ; but the truth is that both are perfect as His sitting there shows. It is because His work on the cross was finished according to the will of God, that we are "perfected for ever by that one offering." It therefore needs nothing to be added to it. And it is because of the everlasting efficacy of the work of the cross, never needing another offering to be added to it, that He *sat down* in perpetuity on the right hand of God. This Aaron could not do. He could never sit down because the same sacrifices needed constant repetition, and even then, however numerous, could not *take away* sins. The priesthood of Christ was not needed to add to the perfect efficacy of the sacrifice ; for, as we have seen, "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14).

The fact is, that the priestly office of Christ is exercised on behalf of saved people, those who were far off, but now in Christ are made nigh by His blood—"for them that come unto God by Him" (Heb. vii. 25). Both in the case of Aaron the typical priest, and Christ the Antitype, their functions were set in activity for the benefit of those who already stood in relationship with God.

(*To be continued.*)

Entrance into the Holiest.

(Notes of an Address on Hebrews ix.-x.)

THE thought that runs through all this part of the Scripture, beloved friends, is this: our entering into the Holiest—the true Holiest, of course. . . . The Christian is given boldness to enter into God's own presence in the Holiest *now* with a purged conscience. Here the Spirit unfolds what that is, to which we will turn with the Lord's help. God has brought me in there by dealing with sin and sins both; so dealing with them as to put them away according to the exigency of what His holy nature is. God has stepped in and done that once for all; it consequently is an eternal redemption.

There is that double character, that (1) we can enter into the Holiest (in spirit, now, you know), and (2) it is an eternal redemption.

There is also that which is necessarily connected with this—that is, that the (3) sins are purged, or else I could not come into the Holiest. That is brought out in the next chapter in a singularly gracious manner, that we may understand the divine source of this salvation, and have a divine knowledge of it—divine certainty.

If God has spoken, it is not, "I think," or "I hope," but, "I have set to my seal that God is

true." The work is divine, the knowledge of it is divinely certain, and we are brought into the divine presence. This flows from God taking up the question of "sin" and "sins." The conscience takes it up when the Spirit of God works in the soul, and our reasoning as to the possibility of being with God is always upon this footing, and must be so. What is the effect of reasoning from what *we* are up to God? If I am a sinner, I say, "How can He receive me as a sinner? If I were righteous, He might receive me." We always reason from ourselves, and our state, *to God*. The Holy Ghost never does. He reasons from our state to *condemnation*; but in reasoning as to salvation, He always reasons from what God is and has done, to its effects upon us, and never from what we are to God.

I am saying this, beloved friends, because you will find it a constant tendency of your hearts to reason from what we are, to what God will be for us. It will be fancied "humility," just like the prodigal son; when he had not met his father, he was reasoning from what he was; he had trusted God's goodness in a measure, but was reasoning from what he was with some little glimpse of what God was in goodness, to what He would be when he met Him in judgment.

When the conscience is awake, I say, How can God meet me with all those sins? Quite true—that is judgment. Judgment is according to works; but as to that, the sinner is brought to

own that he is *lost*. God is of purer eyes than to behold sin, and he finds that he is a *sinner*. What the gospel comes and reveals to us is God's intervention for those that are such, so that we reason from what God has done to what He will do. For instance, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32). The Spirit reasons from what God has done, to how He will act. Again, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10). The Spirit of God reasons down from what God is, and has done, to what we are, and not from what we are to God. . . .

You see, beloved friends, that as a sinner, I am really brought to the sense that I am *lost*, and that I am cast upon what God has done for me, and the gospel comes to reveal to us what God has done.

The real question is, as to the *efficacy of that work*. That is what the Spirit has been here unfolding and insists upon. It is that I will look at a little, for it changes my whole condition with God. I have God, not as a Judge, but as a Saviour; as to my state and relationship with Him, He is always this for me; and He is it because I was *lost*. The work of Christ has purged my conscience, and put away my sins. I affirm that, beloved friends, because there is the

constant tendency to mix up the state of our souls with the sense of the completeness of the work God has wrought for us in Christ. I would not hinder exercise of conscience, but there are conclusions drawn from the state we are in, to question the completeness and the efficacy of that work. That is the mischief. We cannot press the devotedness and full following on the part of the Christian too much; but if I mix up what I have felt with what God tells me of the efficacy of the work of Christ, it is like mixing water with good wine, and both are spoilt.

We never get right till we have thoroughly got hold of the fact of our sins and of our sinfulness too; that "in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18). Well, when I learn that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8), that the flesh has lusts, and the law utterly condemns them—the flesh has a will, and the law forbids what it desires—I find that I am *lost*. Man finds that there always is a will of his own and lusts. The Christian condemns them and judges them; still "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." I may reckon it dead, and hold it dead, but that is what it is. If I am looking at myself as a child of Adam standing before God, I have lusts and a will that is evil. Well, is He going to justify evil? No; what God does, beloved friends, is to bring in Christ.

If the man is a sinner, He judges his sins; but

the work is often deeper when the man is a fair honest character, as Paul was. Why, the man could not eat for three days! As to conscience, he thought he ought to destroy Jesus of Nazareth, religiously misguided as he was. All his religious leaders sent him forth to do it, and he had been trying to make out a righteousness by it, and supposing that he could. But those things, that were his righteousness, just brought him into open enmity against God. He was conscientiously trying to destroy Christ!

God has taken care that when man fell and was turned out of Eden, he should carry out a *conscience* with him. A thief, or a murderer, or a fornicator, whatever it might be, he knows it is *wrong*, not only that God does not allow it. I find the struggling of these lusts; the moment I find this in the spirituality of the law, I see I have a bad nature; the *tree* is bad. Well, then, I am brought to complete self-condemnation, not a pleasant thing at all. I come to see that I *cannot please God*. Why, the heart of man rebels against it in an awful way—thinks it a cruel thing to say that he cannot please God! A person like Paul is brought there perhaps in three days—where sin has been in a grosser shape the conviction may not be so deep. But God does bring to the consciousness not merely of what I have done, but what *I am*. I find not merely that the fruit is bad, but that the tree is bad.

Why have we committed sin? Because we liked it. A man is morally what he likes. A man who likes money is a covetous man—if he likes amusement, he is a man of pleasure. We like sin, that is what we are—Christ changes that. I say that, because we must be brought clear out of this mixing up of what we are with what God has been for us in grace, this looking at God as one that judges instead of one that saves, and saying, “Well, if I am all this, how am I to get salvation?” There must be this change effected. Put a man of the world into heaven, he would get out of it if he could! There would be nothing he would like there; there would be none of the pleasures he cares for, none of the amusements; there would be no money there, and the things that are there he does not like.

Well, that is an awful thing to find out. It is not merely a question as to the imputing of my sins. Everybody in his senses would say, “Of course, I should like to go to heaven!” Well, if it is a thing you really wish, of course you would like to have it as soon as you can. When would you like to have it? To-day? To-morrow? *When you cannot help it!*

I say this, beloved friends, to discover not what sins are, but what the *flesh* is. There is no good thing in it at all.

I repeat it, beloved friends, that there is often a deeper work goes on, a more thorough plough-

ing up of the moral man, a deeper work which judges the movements and principles of the heart, in one who is naturally an upright person, than where it is merely judgment passed on outward sins. I should be in despair about myself if I learnt my condition before God, and did not see the work of Christ for me—yet not quite in despair, for wherever God works in the conscience, there is always more or less of the sense of love in it. There is a conflict goes on, but always a sense of the love of God maintained; the man is in conflict between the sense of God's goodness in the heart and the consciousness of the holiness of God's nature. It is a blessed truth that wherever there is a work of God in the soul, there is always a clinging to the sense of His goodness, let the work in the conscience be ever so deep.

In that beautiful narrative in Matthew of the Syrophœnician woman, she says, "I know that I am a dog, but I know there is goodness enough in God to give even to a dog." He cannot say there is not. There is one overleaping the barriers of dispensation in the sense of the goodness of God.

Well, having just said that, see what the work of Christ effects, dear friends. God turns to that which meets this lost condition; it is "the grace of God that brings salvation." Now there are two parts in that—that is, there is a clearing of the conscience as well as a quickening power of the

Spirit of God ; this latter I have already indeed supposed. The Spirit of God works, the soul gets to see something of the love of God, but quickening does not clear the conscience. Quickenings does not make me say, "I *can* go into the Holiest," but, "I *cannot*."

Now, beloved friends, you may have a great deal of gracious dealing, a great deal of the revelation of God's ways, but until the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ there was the veil, behind which God was, and nobody could pass it. The testimony then was, "I cannot let you into the Holiest ; you are not fit for the Holiest." The way into the Holiest was not yet made manifest. That was a solemn truth. It is not that there were not good people hoping for Messiah ; they feared God and walked in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. But Law was there, requiring from man what he ought to be. There was the veil saying, You cannot come into My presence. The Holy Ghost meant by saying that, that the work was not yet done.

When Christ died, the veil was rent from the top to the bottom, and God is saying now, "You can draw near !" When the veil was there, even with the typical sacrifice, they could not go in, not even the priests. But *now*, in the very consciousness of what God is, "we have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x. 19). I have now the very opposite thing, as to the new nature and its desires, and

as to my condition and relationship with God. Then it was signified that I could *not* go in ; now it is signified that I *can*. The apostle then shows how this has been brought about.

(*To be continued.*)

The Effects of the Cross.

(JOHN XX. 11-29.)

WE see here *the effects of the cross*. The one who had reviled Him had gone to paradise with the Saviour. The death of the Son of God had given courage to Joseph of Arimathea. Mary stood at the sepulchre regardless of what others might think : she rose above all the circumstances. And so are we, notwithstanding all the ruin of the Church, together this morning "with all saints." Not only in the chapter, but where we are this morning, we stand in the effects of the cross, and not only that, but of the resurrection. She was a lonely one there, and the Lord showed Himself to her. As we go on, and get nearer to Christ, we shall be more and more lonely. We are lonely because we are taken out of the world, and still more so because we are separated from ourselves.

There are two currents, one of nature and the things of the world, and the other of the

Spirit. One is decreasing, and the other increasing and rising up into all the fulness of God. "He must increase, but I must decrease." The Lord said to Mary, "Touch Me not." He did not say it unkindly; He never spoke unkindly. The weak hand of man could not hold the blessing in nature. We get the two currents in the sixty-third and eighty-fourth Psalms. "O God, Thou art my God: early will I seek Thee; my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a *dry* and *thirsty* land, where no water is." This was "in the wilderness of Judah." But in the eighty-fourth, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" it is the scene of God's interests. We are introduced into a scene of joys and consolations, and love and fellowship. We are brought into relationship—"My Father and your Father, my God and your God;" we are no more orphans. He says, "Peace be unto you," when we are together, and for power in our service.

(Recollections of the late Rochfort Hunt.)



Correspondence.

Bromley.—If the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is the Church, how is its description is so Israelitish? (Rev. xxi. 2, 9, 14). The twelve gates and twelve angels represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The twelve foundations represent the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Is not this figurative of

a future oneness? I have hitherto for many years believed the Church to be the Body and the Bride of Christ the Lord, and future Lamb's wife. Some say the Body cannot be the Bride, but I consider Adam and Eve is an illustration to the contrary.

THIS opens a large and most interesting field of inquiry. We believe our correspondent is quite right in what for many years he has believed.

But there is nothing Israelitish in verse 2. It has often been pointed out that Revelation xxi. 1-9 describes the *eternal* state, in contrast to Revelation xxi. 10—xxii. 5, which shows the features of the Church during *millennial* times. In eternity all nationalities cease; there will be no Jews as distinct from other men. The Church will hold a special place throughout eternity (see Eph. iii. 21). Her position will then be in the heavens; she will be the tabernacle of God, and so far as the inhabitants of the new earth are concerned, they are spoken of simply as "men,"—redeemed men no doubt, but not distinguished as Jews or Gentiles, as is the case now.

Without doubt the Church is the Bride of Christ; that she is also the *Body* presents no difficulty; besides this the Church is the House of God. These are different figures illustrating the varied relationships in which she stands.

In the latter part of the Apocalypse the sham church, Babylon, occupies a very prominent position. It is Satan's masterpiece of iniquity, as to which the people of God needed to be

thoroughly well informed, in order that they might reject with horror its false pretensions. And it is remarkable that the same form of expression is used by the Spirit of God, when calling the prophet's attention to the true as well as the false (compare Rev. xvii. 1 and xxi. 9).

Overwhelming judgment will be the portion of the false ecclesiastical system ; heavenly glory will be the home of the true.

Personally, we have not a doubt that the Church is the Bride, the Lamb's wife; others have written fully and clearly upon this point, and their works are open to all, and can be had of our publisher.

But we should like more light upon "the holy city, New Jerusalem." Perhaps some of our readers, after prayerful study, may send us some brief remarks upon this point, which at our discretion we may insert in future numbers.

Are the "City" and the "Bride" exactly coextensive? To some, Revelation xxi. 9, 10, seems to imply that they are ; but for ourselves, we are inclined to think that the city represents the whole heavenly company, in contrast to the earthly. In the eternal state there will be earthly saints, simply designated "men" (Rev. xxi. 3). These inhabitants of the new earth will reach their eternal, blessed abode, not through death, but transformed by the mighty power of God, and preserved amidst the dissolution of the elements when our present earth and heaven

flee away. There is no Scripture that leads one to suppose that millennial saints will die.

We are told in Hebrews xi. that Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Is not this most suggestive of the account given in Revelation xxi. 9 to end of the holy city with its twelve foundations?

Then, again, speaking of Old Testament saints, God "hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 16).

In the interesting account given of the city in its *millennial* relations (Rev. xxi. 9, &c.), we see angels standing at its gates, and "names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel."

Angelic hosts will be its doorkeepers; nothing that defiles can enter in (Rev. xxi. 27), but those who have washed their robes may enter in through the gates into the city (Rev. xxii. 14). The redeemed and glorified saints of every age from Abel to the last Apocalyptic martyr will pass in and out of those pearly gates with unquestioned title.

Glorious and blessed company! triumphant trophies of Christ's redemptive work!

While the Church will ever hold a special place, yet there will be a joyful and happy intermingling of heaven's inhabitants. ED.

The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Priesthood and Advocacy.

PRIESTHOOD, too, is always "in things pertaining to God,"—not the Father, but *God* (Heb. ii. 17). He is called of *God*. He sat down on the right hand of *God*. He now appears in the presence of *God*, or before the face of *God*, for us. He intercedes for them that come unto *God* by Him. It is because of this that priesthood does not take up the believer's sins; for being brought to *God*, reconciled to *God*, born of *God*, and children of *God*, the question of our sins as *God's* children has to do with the Father. Hence the Father's injunction to *His children* is to "sin not"; but if any man sin we have an Advocate with (it does not say *God*, but) "the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Our Advocate is "the Righteous One." Priesthood, then, has to do with us in relation to *God*, and that not about sins; while advocacy has to do with us and the *Father*, and that, too, about our sins.

It is very important to be clear about this; for having been cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus on believing, and made children of *God*, our path is to walk in the light, in love, in truth, in faith, and in the Spirit, according to

our Father's will, in fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Any disobedience, transgression, or failure, is unsuitable to the Father, and consequently communion is broken, and we become accountable to Him, not as sinners, as we once were, but as children. Here self-judgment and confession on our part come in, and also the advocacy of the Lord Jesus prior to restoration to the Father's fellowship. It is a question of communion, not of justification; for by Christ "all that believe *are justified from all things*," but the Father cannot give us to enjoy His fellowship while our sins and transgressions are unjudged. And, blessed be His name! "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John i. 9).

Feet-washing.

There is also another ministry of Christ in heaven on our behalf which must not be confounded with priesthood—I refer to the Lord's washing the disciples' feet (John xiii.). This is not Christ as Priest appearing before the face of God for us, neither is it the precious action of His advocacy with the Father about our sins; but it is a most gracious activity of our Lord on our behalf, to maintain us in communion *with Himself*. As He said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast *no part with Me*." It is the warm desire of our adorable Lord that during His

absence we may know what entering into His love, and mind, and ways, and counsels, and service are—having part with Himself.

When Peter saw the blessed Lord gird Himself with a towel, take water, pour it into a basin, and begin to wash the disciples' feet, he cried out, "Thou shalt never wash my feet," which brought out the Lord's gracious announcement already referred to, of the imperative necessity of this ministry in order to maintain us in communion with Himself. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part *with Me*" (ver. 8). And when Peter with equal rashness replied, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head," it served to bring out from the Master's heart the true meaning of this most precious ministry. "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (ver. 10), clearly showing us that a believer in the Lord Jesus having been completely cleansed from sin by His precious blood,* never needs to have that process repeated; but he does need to have the defilement removed from him which he may contract in his daily walk. In

* While it is perfectly true that when once cleansed in the precious blood of Christ, this process cannot be repeated; yet it is important to observe that it is not here a question of cleansing by blood, as in 1 John i. 7. "He that is washed" refers to the new birth, as in John iii.—"born of water." The new birth can no more be repeated than can the cleansing by the blood.—ED.

other words, he that hath been washed all over in a bath, needs only to have his feet washed from the defilement he may have contracted in his subsequent walk. And this charmingly illustrates one of the most precious ministries of Christ on our behalf while He is seated on the right hand of God. It is the needed application of the Word to our souls, to cleanse away from us the evil we pick up in our daily walk, so as to keep our hearts free and happy for communion with Himself.

We read in Ephesians of "the washing of water by the Word." All this, too, was foreshadowed by the altar of burnt-offering and the laver. After the priests had been washed all over and sprinkled with the blood, it needed never to be repeated; but after this, when they had been consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, though often handling the sacrifices, &c., they went to the laver, and washed their hands and feet every time they went into the tabernacle of the congregation, to have to do with the things of God and the service of the sanctuary. It is a mistake, therefore, to suppose that when a believer is conscious of defilement, and of having failed and dishonoured the Lord, that he needs, as some say, to take his place again *as a sinner*, and to be *sprinkled again with the blood*—that would be to go back again to the altar instead of the laver. But what we have here is the wondrous care of Christ Himself over

us, so ministering His Word as to wash our souls clean, and (as the wiping with the towel sets forth) making us feel so comforted in His presence as to be able to go on in happy fellowship with Himself. While defilement is on our consciences, communion with our infinitely holy Lord must be hindered ; but He restoreth our souls, washes us with the Word, and gives us again to enjoy the blessedness of His own presence with us.

The Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls.

But there is another character of ministry most graciously carried on by our blessed Lord on our behalf at this present time—I refer to His being the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls ; not only overseeing everything that concerns us, but also feeding, tending, leading us into varied pastures, guiding us in difficulties and dangers, bringing us out of mischief, and setting us right when wrong. Here also we see a difference as to the character of the ministry. The truth is that the same blessed Lord who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, sustains various offices and exercises different ministries on our behalf. And all these being conducted by the same loving heart, and the object of all the ministries being the same persons, they must necessarily in some respects run one into the other. Still their distinctness cannot be questioned, and the knowledge of all

are necessary in order to meet our varied needs. We may say, then, speaking in general terms, that the *priesthood* of Christ has to do with us in things pertaining to *God*, and not about our sins. The *advocacy* of Christ has to do with the *Father*, and about the sins of His children. The action of *washing the feet* is to sustain our souls in conscious happy communion with *Christ Himself*; while Christ as *Shepherd* cares for the state of our souls, so as to preserve us in health and strength, according to His own gracious will.

Having grouped together some of the precious offices of our adorable Lord, in order to show that, strictly speaking, His priesthood is not the same as His advocacy, His washing of our feet and His shepherding of our souls, the way has been cleared to enable us to pursue our inquiry as to the priesthood of Christ in our next lecture. We can scarcely ascribe too much importance to the subject, because it has to do with the conscious sustainment of our souls day by day in the presence of God. This, and every other ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all our blessings, are no doubt based upon His atoning work, as we sometimes sing, and truly so—

“Our every joy on earth, in heaven,
We owe it to Thy blood.”

A Risen and Glorified Christ.

But while the death of Jesus is the alone foundation of all our confidence and hope, yet the precious lessons of divine grace do not end

here ; for Jesus is risen from among the dead ; which shows that He hath triumphed over death, and Satan, and the grave for us, as well as put away our sins ; that we have been quickened together with Him, thus giving us new life—resurrection life, life in One who is on the other side of death ; a subject of deepest importance and comfort and large in its wealth to our souls. But more than this, Jesus has ascended, gone into the presence of God ; and there we are now as to standing before God, complete in Him, who is our righteousness for evermore. And besides all this, as we have seen, He is our ever-living, ever-loving, ever-faithful High Priest, our Advocate, the Washer of our feet, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. What an incalculable loss to those who are in ignorance of what the finished work of Jesus has accomplished for us, and what He is to us, and for us, now as risen and ascended ! How terribly defective, not to say damaging to souls, to suppose that the proper place of the Christian is, as they say, “to be always at the foot of the cross” ! It is impossible that Christians in such a state can be enjoying the peace, liberty, and triumph to which the grace of God so richly entitles them. How can they be in the true place of separation from the world, delivered from self, and consciously true worshippers of the Father, enjoying communion with the Lord, or be free to live unto God, and have leisure to help the souls of others ?

Happy indeed are those who can look back upon the cross, and adoringly praise Him for His finished work—who can look up to the throne and now “see Jesus” by faith “crowned with glory and honour,” and delight in all He is to God there, and all He is to us and for us; happier still to be rejoicing in the prospect of His soon coming to receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we may be also.

Hints on Ezekiel.

CHAP. I.—THE OPENED HEAVENS.

AS we have seen, Ezekiel was one of the three prophets of the period of the captivity.

Jeremiah had been left in Jerusalem amongst the poor of the land, where in vain he sought to bow their rebellious hearts under the governmental chastening of Jehovah, and was eventually carried by them into Egypt (Jer. xliii. 6).

Daniel was taken to Babylon, where in the king's court he maintained a faithful testimony, and was inspired of God to reveal the rise, course, and final judgment of the great Gentile powers.

But Ezekiel finds himself at the same period of time under far different circumstances: “I was among the captives by the river of Chebar.”

All three were faithful men of God—none more so, we may truly say, and yet they shared in different ways in the results of the unfaithfulness of the people as a whole. At the same time, special marks of God's favour were vouchsafed to each.

To Ezekiel "the heavens were opened."

Nowhere else does this occur in the Old Testament, and here the purpose is entirely different to what we find in the New. There, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth was the object of the Father's delight when "the heavens were opened unto Him" at His baptism by John (Matt. iii. 16, 17). Then again was He the object in heaven when Stephen, the first Christian martyr, looked up and saw through those opened heavens "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts vii. 56); and it will be the same blessed One who in a coming day will issue forth from those opened heavens as the Son of man to execute judgment (Rev. xix. 11-17).

These are the three occasions where in the New Testament we are shown the heavens opened. But here in Ezekiel it has to do with "visions of God," connected with the judgment upon Israel in general, upon Jerusalem in particular, as well as upon the nations around.

The divisions of the book may here be noted. The first chapter serves as a kind of introduction to the whole, and shows us in a symbolic manner what are the varied attributes of God, who was

about to interfere in judgment. Then to the end of chapter xxiv. there follows in chronological order a series of prophecies that had in view the rebellious people, city, and king. Next (chapters xxv.-xxxii.), the nations surrounding the faithless people are mentioned as objects of divine judgment. From chapters xxxiii. to the end, Israel once more becomes the subject—their restoration morally, as well as actually, to their own land, the re-establishment of their religious life in that land, and many other matters of the deepest interest. The judgment of Gog and all his mighty hosts is likewise described in chapters xxxviii. and xxxix. But all this will come before us in due course as, with God's help, we advance through the book.

The book, then, is one of judgment introductory to full millennial blessing on the earth, when, with temple rebuilt, Israel and Judah reunited, the glory of the God of Israel will return and fill the earth with its brightness (Ezek. xliii.). Jehovah will be there (chap. xlvi. 35).

But we must observe that Jehovah's throne is not here seen in Jerusalem. The palmy days of Solomon are passed away, those days when he sat as king on the throne of the Lord in Zion and prophesied (1 Chron. xxix. 23). Now everything was going wrong in Israel. Unfaithfulness to the Lord, idolatry, and disobedience had brought down the wrath of the Lord upon their guilty heads, "till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16); and

in Ezekiel's vision that throne is seen "above the firmament,"—outside the city, and separate from its wickedness; above it, too, and judging it for the very sins which had driven it from its midst.

The captivity of the chosen but guilty people had already commenced (Ezek. i. 2), when our prophet beholds in vision the approach of overwhelming judgment from the north (ver. 4); this was the complete destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar in the days of Zedekiah, "who humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord," but, on the contrary, added to all his other sins that of breaking the solemn oath which he had sworn to the Gentile monarch (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12, 13). It is this descent of Babylon's power upon Palestine that is seen in vision as the whirlwind "out of the north." From that day to this, Jerusalem has been trodden under foot of the Gentiles, and will remain so until the time of its great tribulation is over, and Christ, the rightful King, David's Son and David's Lord, shall take His great power and reign.

Every feature in that which follows, suggests the thought of divine judgment and government. The *cloud* and the *fire*, the well-known Old Testament symbols of Jehovah's presence, are alluded to in verse 4; and "out of the midst thereof" are seen to come the likeness of four living creatures. These living creatures are shown to be the cherubim of chapter x. They

are the executors of God's government in human affairs.

THE LIVING CREATURES—Chap. i. 5-15.

Without going into great detail, we may notice some features connected with these cherubim. That they are the instruments of God's government of man upon the earth, is clear from Gen. iii. 24. We need not speculate as to what character at any particular time they may have, whether angelic or human. The great and important truth we learn from this chapter is, that God's throne is the source whence all this government proceeds, and that all this is executed according to the attributes here symbolically represented.

The living creatures are four in number, like the beasts or living creatures in the Apocalypse, which doubtless point to the same cherubic instruments of divine government. If Ezekiel i. and Revelation iv. be read together, we cannot help being struck with the many points of resemblance.

One great feature that must strike the reader of our chapter is, that when God directs human affairs, even by indirect means, all is done with perfect intelligence, for He knows the end from the beginning (Isa. xlv. 10). "They had the likeness of a man," we are told, "and every one had four faces"; amidst all classes of the animal creation man stands out prominent in intelligence, and the face is that which expresses it.

But not only were there faces, "every one had four wings"; they were marked by swiftness to accomplish, as well as by intelligence to understand. Further, "they had the hands of a man under their wings," a symbol which denotes aptness and cleverness in execution. "They went every one straight forward": nothing can turn God aside from accomplishing His plans; He works all things after the counsel of His own will; and though man may be rebellious and kick against the pricks, yet everything moves onward surely and certainly towards the end that God has designed, and long since foretold,—“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isa. xlvi. 10).

Further characteristics are now added in connection with the faces of the living creatures (ver. 10). Each manifested the intelligence of man, the strength of the lion, the endurance and patience of the ox, and the rapidity of the eagle. But more than this, all moved in perfect conformity to the will of God: "whither the spirit was to go, they went" (ver. 12); and that will was carried out without any hesitation or delay, "the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning" (ver. 14). Again, the appearance of the living creatures was "like burning coals of *fire*, and like the appearance of *lamps*" (ver. 13), the very image under which God had made known to Abraham the character of His dealings with the patriarch's

seed throughout the long years of their servitude (Gen. xv.); while passing through the furnace of His chastisement, the hearts of those that feared the Lord would be sustained by the bright lamp of prophetic encouragement.

THE MOVING WHEELS—Chap. i. 15-26.

Next we are given to see the perfect ease with which everything moved towards the accomplishment of heaven's decrees. No figure could more forcibly present this idea to the mind than that which is here used by the Spirit of God: "When the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood . . . for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels" (vers. 19-21).

The affairs of nations and the changes in human fortunes may appear to be accidental, but with God nothing is a matter of chance, all is working towards the fulfilment of His purpose. Though the wheels of His government may to us sometimes appear to move slowly, yet all that happens "under the firmament" is in direct accord with what is "above the firma-

ment." Though man in the foolish pride of his puny will may seek to defy the Most High, yet God is sovereign Lord of all, and the authority of His throne is supreme, and that oftentimes where men least expect it.

With adoring heart the believer prostrates himself before Him and exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 33-36).

Access to God.

(Notes of an Address on Hebrews ix.-x. continued.)

THERE is more than one thing needful, beloved friends, for this access to God. I must get my sins purged; sin cannot enter into the Holiest. And further, I must have my *conscience* purged, or else I shall not enter in. If a man has debts, he does not like to meet his creditors; and even if they *are* paid, but he does not know it, he does not like to meet them either. We must know that the conscience is cleared, if

we would go right up to God. If God is dealing with us (perhaps I should rather say *for* us), He brings us into His own presence with our conscience cleared.

Now notice what a remarkable expression we have here in contrast with those Jewish things ; " For Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Read Heb. ix. 11, 14, 24, 26.)

We are not come to the end of the world yet—the full force is "the consummation of the ages"—that is, the consummation of the whole thing by which man had been tried and exercised to bring out what I have been speaking of, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. It was not only that man had sinned, that he had broken the law, and been proved guilty before God ; but when he had the Saviour present, in grace, *he refused Him* ; God had come into the world—"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." That is the sense, that full testing had gone on without law, under law, and in the trial of His *love*. They rejected Him, dealing in love. That is what the cross was, "They hated Me without a cause" (John xv. 25).

Christianity starts from this : that God has

been in the world in love, and that man has turned Him out. It is not merely that man has sinned, and that God has turned him out; that was the case in Eden. But when God came into this world of sin, man said, "We will not have Him, even if it be in love!" The Lord Jesus said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin," &c. If I am a Christian, it means that Christ has been rejected. What was Christ? "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." It is blessed to see it. Perfectly holy in all His ways, He could not be defiled, and therefore was able to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. Nature cannot stand here, let it be honest enough. It must be all grace—nothing else will do.

This light detects a Pharisee. See that woman taken in adultery, in the very act (John viii). If He says, "Stone her," He is no Saviour. If He says, "You must not," He has broken the law. You must either give up grace or give up the law, they urge. "Stop," says the Saviour; "*I am going to apply the law to all of you!*" So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her; and again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest unto the last, and Jesus was left alone; and the woman standing in the midst."

The eldest had most character to lose, and he went out first. It does not make a bit of difference whether a man had ten sins or five hundred. A wretched sinner she was; nobody excuses her. God says, "It will not do to bring this one up and leave you hardened ones behind!" God takes them *all* into the light.

Who will stand that? No one in Leamington* or anywhere else! Now come, He says, I can show grace. I am not come to judge; I am come to save.

The sin was completely proven, and in that moral sense it was the end of the world. Leave man to himself? Why, God had to bring the flood in, he was so bad. And as to Israel, they were attaching the name of Jehovah to their sin; they made the name of Jehovah blasphemed among the heathen. *Love* they rejected, and this is the end of man's history, and the beginning of God's declaring of Himself. "Now, He says," we have the end of what you are; what *I am* must come out. If you have brought out enmity against God, I am going to show you that I love you." The individual sinner is brought to have an exercised conscience about himself.

When my own conscience comes to own this, not only that I have broken the law, but that I am a lost sinner—God says, "Now you know yourself; I come that you may know Me, and that you may know that I am a Saviour; I say

* Where the lecture was given.

that you *are* a lost sinner, but that Christ has come into the world to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Christ cleared the sins totally away, doing it all *Himself*. The cross was the turning-point to God. It was there Christ bore our sins, and the hatred that crucified Him was all we had to do with it. The thing that saves us is all His own. What part in it had we? None else besides our sins, and the hatred that crucified Him. God's part was giving His only-begotten Son.

We have now to see what God can do for man, not from reasoning as to what he is for God, but by believing what God has been and is for him. When the prodigal son had the best robe on, he could not say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." His father was treating him as a child; he was come into the new condition. It was not merely the new desires he had, the repentance merely, but it was what the father had done for him so as to bring him into his own presence.

There was I, a sinner, loving any trifle better than God, He who has so loved me as to give His own Son for me! "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." There I get in my heart and mind not simply a general vague sense that God is love, but I learn that in that love He has done a work for me.

Well, I believe Christ died for my sins according to the Scriptures. Had He to die often? "Oh, no!" says the apostle; "that could not be." Christ's sacrifice was not like one of those Jewish sacrifices, in which there was a remembrance again made of sins every year. Mark how strongly that is put, "for then must He often have *suffered*," &c. He had *really* to drink the cup. He sweat great drops of blood only thinking of it in the garden of Gethsemane. He *suffered*. Well, if it is not done perfectly, done once for all, Christ must have suffered often. That cannot be. He cannot come down again and die over again. If He has borne my sins in His own body on the tree, He has done once and for ever the thing that puts them all away. If the putting away all my sins is not done, it never can be. Individual after individual is brought to acknowledge it, but if the work is not done and finished, it never can be done. Therefore He says, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John xvii. 4). "It is finished!" (John xix. 30.)

Those priests were standing, often offering the same sacrifices, which could never take away sins. Sin came up, they had to do it over again: it was a perpetual remembrance of sins made again every year. A year goes round, and the sacrifice must be repeated. Sins were there. It was a continual memorial. "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat

down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Heb. x. 14). He for ever "sat down"; it was after standing. The work was completely and fully done, once and for ever, and He sits down, the work accomplished once for all, completely according to the glory of God.

Woe to him who neglects this great salvation! It is a finished work. You cannot have a stronger expression of it than this, "that the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins" (Heb. x. 2). The Lord Jesus has, by the Eternal Spirit, "offered Himself without spot to God." He drank the bitter cup for me, and the next point He brings out is this, that having done that, He appears now in the presence of God for me, "Who, being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 4); and when I go to God I find Him sitting there, the perpetual witness that He has cleared my sins away, and that He is in the presence of God for me. I find Him who has done it sitting there; else "must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world." The sins could not be put away if He had not finished the work. But He *has*. If not, it never could be done.

It is settled peace when my soul receives the testimony of the Holy Ghost to this. "For by

one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified ;” “ He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal redemption* ;” “ He is the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of *eternal inheritance*.”

Then, you see, beloved friends, supposing through grace I say, “ Well, I am a poor sinner, I hate those sins, the root and principle in me, how can I be in the presence of God ?” *I find Christ there*, who has put away those sins — Christ in the presence of God for me. I find this blessed truth, I have a Saviour in the glory. I follow Him up to the cross, I see Him there under my sins. I see Him now at God's right hand in the glory ! Oh ! I say, He has not got my sins there ! If I see Him in the glory, I say, “ Well, my sins are gone !” That is the practical word. “ When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” I see Him in the glory who bore my sins, and I know they are all gone.

My conscience is purged, when in the simplicity of faith I see that God Himself has put away my sins, that the Lord Jesus Christ has drunk the cup for me, that He His own self bore my sins in His own body on the tree. I know they are *gone*. The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins. When I look up to God, and see

Christ in glory, is there a question of imputation of my sins to trouble me?

Mark, beloved friends, I do not speak of "past, present, and future sins." I cannot say "future." I never ought to think of committing a sin again. I do not put my state at this moment before God into question. I hear people saying, "Oh, I know my sins up to conversion are gone!" Did Christ bear your sins up to conversion? What is the meaning of that? It is confounding the sense of it brought home to my soul with the efficacy of the work by which He appears in the presence of God for me.

How comes it all about? It is by God's blessed will. He willed my salvation; He has given me the Saviour. There are three things connected with the work of which I speak—there must be some one having the kindness to *do* it; it must be *done*; and I must *know* that it is done. Of these three things in Hebrews the first is, that it is by the will of God. We see the blessed Son "was made lower than the angels for the suffering of death, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man;"—"Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, To do Thy will, O God!"—"By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once* for all." He was crucified. It is done. It is not only that there was the goodwill of love, to be willing to do it, but it is *done*. I get the divine goodwill

of God in it. It is a divine work done and finished so that Christ, who bore our sins, has "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Now, I want to *know* it. The Holy Ghost tells me of the eternal efficacy of the work. I have the blessed will of God that gave Christ. I have the work finished, and I have the divine testimony to it by the Holy Ghost. I have the three things—(1) the love that was willing to have it done; (2) the work finished, in that which was done once for all upon the cross; and (3) the testimony of God Himself that He no more will bear my sins in mind.

Mark the effect that flowed from it. The veil was rent from the top to the bottom. That work has put my sins away that shut me out, and it has opened the door to let me in. I go right into the presence of God Himself, in the Holiest, and I go in *white as snow*. What let's me into the presence of that Holiest of all is the very thing that put all my sins away.

Fragment.

"**N**O acceptance of Christ but as *crucified* avails for life. It is not His virtues, His instructions, His example, or the like, but His death (His flesh and blood), that must be fed upon. His death accomplished,

singly and alone, what altogether and beside never did and never could. The blessed Lord died, gave up the Ghost, or surrendered the life which He had, and which none had title to take from Him. But the moment that was done, results broke forth which all His previous life had never produced. It was then, but not till then, that the veil of the Temple was rent, the rocks riven, the graves opened. Heaven, earth, and hell felt a power they had never owned before. The life of Jesus, His charities to man, His subjection to God, the savour of His spotless human nature, the holiness of that which had been born of the Virgin—none of these, nor all of them together, nor everything in Him and about Him, by Him or through Him, short of the surrender of life, would ever have rent the veil or broken up the graves. God would still have been at a distance, hell been still unconquered, and He that has the power of death still undestroyed. The blood of the dear Son has done what all beside never did, never could do. And over Him thus preached and set forth, it is still to be said, "He that hath the Son hath life."

J. G. B.

Correspondence.

"A friend of mine," writes a correspondent, "does not believe that any of the blessed Saviour's invitations, 'Come unto Me,' nor any of the 'Comes' in John's

Gospel, are applicable to the present day, and also that you cannot preach the gospel from the parable of the prodigal son, &c. &c. Matthew xxii., 'Come, for all things are ready,' is stoutly refused, &c. &c."

It seems a waste of time to discuss such a matter. Wait until your friend enters the heavenly courts and sees the myriads that have reached those scenes of light and peace and joy, not through hypercritical and hair-splitting theology, but through earnest, even if it be faultily-expressed, appeals—he will then know whether these blessed "Comes" had any present-day application. Thank God they have, as multitudes can testify.

But Matthew xxii. 2-14 should not be so dogmatically refused. Immediately following the parable of the householder and the vineyard, it forms a beautiful sequel; the former shows man's responsibility under law; the latter, his responsibility under grace. Man's "Come, let us kill Him," is answered by God's "Come unto the marriage." What soul-subduing and heart-captivating grace is here—altogether lost by such cold criticism as your friend indulges in. Let him try it, if he has never done so before; let him go forth amidst the perishing masses around him, with a heart overflowing with a sense of the Saviour's love that led Him even to death, and of God's infinite grace that, in spite of all man's hatred, as shown at the cross, now sends a blessed invitation to a guilty world: "All things are

ready ; come unto the marriage." Oh, for more of this earnest pleading !

As is well known, the Gospel of Matthew is essentially dispensational in its teaching. In the parable of the vineyard, we see God seeking fruit from Israel on the ground of law ; this ended so far as they were concerned with the murder of Messiah, and their final judgment as a nation. In chapter xxii. a new dealing commences, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son," &c. Man would not have God when He came into his world (chap. xxi.) ; would man now accept God's offer of glory with His Son (chap. xxii.) ? When the Lord was here on earth, the kingdom of heaven was at hand. It had not yet been established, for this required His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. Note, too, the difference between the first and second missions of the servants of the king. At their first mission the servants did not say, "All things are ready ;" they simply called them that were "bidden." But they would not come ; it was even so in the case of the Jews before the cross.

But now what a change ! "All things are ready ; come unto the marriage." The cross, it *has been well observed, is the turning-point of the passage ;* on the basis of that mighty work God can now declare that *all* is ready. This testimony sounded forth after the ascension of Christ, first of all to the guilty nation of Israel.

The first mission was during the life of the Lord, whether directly through His own ministry, or through the twelve or the seventy ; the second was after His death and ascension, through the apostles in the early chapters of the Acts. This Israel rejected, even as they had done the former, the result being a terrible outpouring of judgment both upon themselves and their city, Jerusalem (verses 4-7).

Then goes forth the call of God to all, whoever and whatever they may be—Jew or Gentile, good or bad. Your friend says, "In Christ's time it was 'Come ;' in the present time, it is 'Believe.'" Matthew xxii. is a clear answer that ever since the cross it has been both "Come" and "Believe."

ED.

If Jesus is coming—and surely 'tis true—
 What matters the trifles around us?
 If Jesus is coming, we need not lament
 When losing some things that surround us.
 Yes—Jesus *is* coming, rejoice and be glad,
 Not burdened with trouble or sorrow,
 For Jesus *is* coming, His own to receive,
 It may be to-day or to-morrow. M. E. C.

"LET your moderation (or yieldingness) be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 5, 6).

Hints on Ezekiel.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE LIKENESS OF THE
GLORY OF THE LORD—Chap. i. 26-28.

THE throne of the Supreme Ruler of the universe is seen in vision by our prophet above the firmament, and upon it as the appearance of a man. It is not questioned that it is God who will judge the world in righteousness; nevertheless it will be "by that man whom He hath ordained" (Acts xvii. 31), even by Him who, when here on earth, was the despised and rejected One.

The man Christ Jesus was as truly God as He was truly man, and it is according to Heaven's decree, that those who refuse to bow the knee to Him in this day of grace, shall be obliged to do so in the day of judgment, to God's glory, even though, alas! it be to their own perdition. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father . . . and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man" (John v. 22-28).

Before entering into the details of God's judicial dealings with respect to Israel and the nations, Ezekiel is given a sight of the glory of the Lord, but connected with the throne of judg-

ment, and not as seen by believers now in the face of Jesus Christ. There was the appearance of *fire*, the constant symbol of that judgment which consumes unsparingly every particle of man's sin wherever found. But round about the fire was the appearance of a brightness, and that the brightness "of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain." In the *bow* we have the unfailing pledge of God's mercy; and so in the prophetic utterances that follow in the after-part of the book, we shall see that after the dark night of Israel's sin and judgment is passed, there will be the dawn of a bright and glorious day of earthly blessing, when they shall have loathed themselves and repented of all their evil ways.

The effect upon Ezekiel's soul of this vision of the glory of the Lord is next described: "When I saw it, I fell upon my face." The prophet is about to be used as the mouthpiece of Jehovah, to convey to the rebellious people the solemn announcements of His judgment, but he is made to feel first in his own heart how real a thing it is to have to do with God.

THE VOICE THAT SPAKE—Chap. ii.

"Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee" (ver. 1). Before Ezekiel can speak Jehovah's words to the rebellious house of Israel, he must first of all hear for himself: "But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee;

Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee." He must drink into his own soul the bitterness of those lamentations and woes with which he is sent to the guilty nation.

The way in which the prophet is addressed is most striking and worthy of note. All through the book now under review do we find the title "son of man" given to Ezekiel. This was Christ's own title of rejection, when refused by the Jewish nation as Messiah and King; and Ezekiel in his measure is given the same place, outside the nation, though sent to them with words of warning. It was different in the case of Isaiah and Jeremiah: there the people were still owned of God; but now they were given up, because of their sin, into the power of the Gentiles. The Chaldean captivity had already commenced with a large portion of the people; still, however, some were left in Jerusalem: these were soon to share in a similar judgment in the days of Zedekiah. It is for this reason that Ezekiel is sent with a message to the people, whereas in Daniel the people themselves are never addressed. In Ezekiel there was still a small remnant recognised at Jerusalem, in Daniel Lo-ammi (not My people) was written upon the whole.

"Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to rebellious Gentiles (Goyim) that have rebelled against Me" (ver. 3). With all their privileges, they were morally no better than the

nations that knew not God ; nevertheless Ezekiel is sent with a "Thus saith the Lord God," and they should know that a prophet had been amongst them.

THE ROLL OF WARNING—Chap. iii.

The prophet is bidden to eat the roll written within and without, overflowing with judgment. The solemn truth was to penetrate his very soul ; his whole moral being was to be filled with the bitterness of that which made such judgment necessary (ver. 14). And yet in his mouth it was as honey for sweetness ; there is no inconsistency in these apparently opposite thoughts. That bitterness should fill his spirit at the sight of the sinful people, and the well-merited punishment that was hanging over them, we can well understand ; while on the other hand, that God should deign to communicate His word, even though it be a word of judgment, is full of sweetness. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. xviii. 17). It was so, too, in the case of the beloved disciple John (Rev. x. 9), chosen of God to communicate the still more solemn judgments yet to fall on guiltier Christendom. None more familiar than John with the grace and tenderness of the heart of Jesus, as we see in his gospel, and yet was he the one to declare the woes that filled the vials of God's wrath about to be poured upon apostate Christendom.

Ezekiel is sent to the house of Israel, assured beforehand that they will not hearken to him, for they would not hearken to the Lord (ver. 7); they were more hardened even than the heathen. But the prophet was not to be dismayed at their looks, but to receive into his own heart all Jehovah's words, and then to go to them of the captivity with, "Thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."

Amidst such discouragements, it needed indeed that he should be lifted up by the Spirit, be strengthened with a vision of the glory, and feel the hand of the Lord strong upon him (verses 12-15). And yet, faithful man as he was, he must take his share in the sorrow of the captivity, and sit "where they sat." After *seven* days, tasting to the full the bitter humiliation, the word of the Lord came unto him. But if the house of Israel as a whole refused to listen, individuals might still hearken. "Give them warning from Me," said the Lord, holding His servant responsible for the discharge of his solemn duty (verses 15-22).

Another sight of the glory casts him prostrate, the only attitude that befits man in presence of the Divine Majesty. So far as the nation was concerned he was to be dumb, his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth; he was not to be to them a reprover, for they were a rebellious house. Nevertheless, "he that heareth, let him

hear." There is a striking similarity between this and the call of the Spirit to the churches (Rev. ii., iii.). In both, collective repentance was impossible: things had gone too far in moral failure and sin; individuals only would listen, whether in Israel then, or in Christendom to-day (verses 22-27).



The Consequences of Christ's Work.



NOW, beloved friends, a step more for those who have got that conscious access to God. The apostle goes a little further. We find our nature an evil tree. We have got the sins put away; "Christ appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"—that is, that the work of the blessed Lord, besides the bearing of the sins, is so perfect, perfect in everything, that He was made sin for us, and that then sin was dealt with absolutely: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

It is not only that my sins have been borne, but that God Himself has been perfectly glorified in Christ who died. "Now," He says, "the Son of man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him"

—that is, He stands there as made sin, not only as bearing my sins, but as the Holy One, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Not only as the obedient One; God has been perfectly glorified in Him. I have no doubt the full result will not come out till that day when there will be the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. “The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world”—that is, that the whole question has been settled with God, so that finally we shall have the new heaven and the new earth.

In everything God has to do now, He has to do with sin—supposing He judges, it is against sin; suppose He shows mercy, it is because sin has come in. He has to deal with it in everything, either in mercy or in judgment. The time will come when there will be no sin, and that founded on the cross of Christ—founded upon the efficacy of His finished work, wherein He perfectly glorified God. The effect is that there will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The work that has put away sin I know now, and I get by faith its blessed result; I know it in myself, I have Christ as my life. The practical result is to reckon myself dead. He has borne my sins upon the cross, He has died and glorified God perfectly, He has risen up in a totally new state. The old Adam state is done with for every one that believeth on Him. He is the beginning, the Head of that new

creation of God ; and I find now that my part is with Him, and not with the old sinful world. As to my body, I am in the old creation still.

I stand before God in the effect of Christ's work. Christ stood before God taking the effect of my work. I am before God taking the effect of His work. That is where the believer has overcome death. Death is all gain to me—I shall only go to the Lord—there is complete and absolute deliverance. As to my standing before God, I have been taken out of the position I was in, and put into another; not only under shelter, not only like Israel at the Red Sea, but taken out to go into a new position before God. This is expressed in Romans, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. v. 10). The Spirit of God can dwell in me, because I am cleansed by the blood. And that Spirit dwelling in me, I am united to Christ. "In that day, ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (John xiv. 20). There I get practice, too; I cannot be in Christ without Christ being in me. Well, let me see Him in you; God, and the saints, and the world too, have the right to expect to see Him in me. If I am accepted in the Beloved, Christ is in me, and as the apostle says, it is "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our

body." Therefore he says to the Corinthians, "Ye are the epistle of Christ;" Christ is to be read in you; He is graven upon your hearts by the Spirit of the Living God. As to my standing as a Christian, Christ is before God for me, and my place is settled. I am to bear Christ about in the world, and there is my responsibility.

You will see, beloved friends, how the apostle puts it plainly here. "He appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." When my heart is before God, I can say: Well, not only Christ has put away my sin, but I stand before God in the result of what He has done! I do not call myself a child of Adam; I am a child of God. He has put away our sins, and our place is in Christ. Mark then, beloved friends, what follows: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." There is the entire effect of sin, I mean according to God's order. If God enters into judgment with sinners, all are condemned: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." But as Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, so "to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time"—what to?—"to *salvation*." Now I get the place of the Christian, and I feel happy.

I begin at Christ's first coming, and I say, Oh! He has put my sins away, He has made an end of sin once for all, and I am before God in Him, and I have got the Holy Ghost giving the blessed consciousness of it. "At that day ye shall *know* that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." Death is gain to me, if I get that; and as to judgment, the Person who is to be my Judge, is the Person who has put away all my sins for ever. He cannot charge the sins upon me that He has put away Himself. God has taken care for your peace in that way, that the Person who is to be the Judge, was first the Saviour—no fear at all! God has dealt with our sins, He sends out the tidings of it—all the world has the testimony by the Spirit to it now—*testimony received by faith*.

God has dealt with them already, put them away instead of leaving them to the time when He comes to deal with them in judgment. Has Christ not come the first time? To be sure. Is He not coming again? "To them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation,"—"without sin," that is, having nothing more to say to it. When He comes the second time, He comes having nothing to say about sin. Why? Because He came the first time to put it away by the sacrifice of Himself,—“unto salvation”; that is, to bring them into the glory, “that where I am, there ye may be also.”

You see, beloved friends, there is the place and the blessedness we have. Do I fear the Lord's coming? The very opposite. Do you think He is coming to receive men in their sinful state in there? He came the first time to put that away. He makes us feel the sins, makes us hate sin; but God has dealt with our sins in Christ, and to bring them up again would be to deny the efficacy of Christ's work. If a man neglects this great salvation, he is doubly guilty. "How shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation." Well, what is this great salvation? He has put away my sins, and *I believe* He has done it. He came about sin before; He has nothing to do with sin the second time. His whole business was sin in a certain sense before, but He has nothing to do with it when He appears the second time.

Village Evangelisation.

DEAR BROTHER,—I feel that I must write you on the above subject, which you have introduced to the *Christian's Library*. I can but regard your article as a very timely one, and hope that many may be stirred up to do what they can in such a truly needy field. Your description of the appalling state of

one village, only applies too correctly to that of many others. The blighting effects of the drinking customs of the people on both body and soul are sadly apparent in many a place, and surely nothing but a gospel which is God's *power* unto salvation can meet such cases! May all those who have read your words on this subject lay them to heart, and realise their responsibility in the matter as never before! How blessed to be in the enjoyment of the *only* remedy for such a terrible state of affairs! How increasingly blessed is that gospel as it is told out to others!

As your words clearly show, religious instruction of men in their sins cannot meet their case. They indeed need to be alarmed as to their lost condition, and thus to be led to receive Christ as a *Saviour*. Solemn as is the position of those who take the care of the souls in a parish upon them whilst still unsaved themselves, yet this should not blind us to *our* responsibility to tell out the gospel wherever opportunity offers. The thought of the nearness of the Lord's coming should surely lead us to invite souls to come to Christ while "yet there is room."

I write as one who has specially felt the need of the villages, and as one who has made a point of carrying out a house-to-house visitation with tracts and gospel books in several districts. This can generally be arranged during a holiday at any rate. You remark that "all are not preachers,"

but here is a field open to many others. A remarkable variety of cases will be met with, hence a good grounding in the Scriptures is most needful. To those who hesitate to take up the work, may I say that the encouragement met with has very largely outweighed the very few rebuffs experienced. The privilege of giving the gospel to souls who really know that they stand in need of it, is truly a blessed one. A selection of useful pamphlets calculated to help believers in their varied spheres and conditions, should also be carried. This part of the work has received warm appreciation from many who, in isolated places, are in danger of spiritual starvation. In conclusion, I must mention the importance of prayer for guidance in the work, and that all needed wisdom may be given one. An old preacher remarked to his son: "Always speak *to* the Lord, before you speak *about* Him."

C. W.

Gehazi.

AMONG the many instances of divine grace and illustrations of the gospel, contained in the Old Testament, there are few more attractive than the story of Naaman (2 Kings v.).

Where is the evangelist that has not delighted to trace the thread of redeeming mercy towards that "honourable" but afflicted man, from the voice of "the little maid" in his own household, and the expostulation of his servants when his pride was roused, to the moment when, in obedience to the word of Elisha, he dipped himself seven times in Jordan's stream, and obtained the cure so ardently desired? "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted" is the golden rule for the soul in having to do with God; and in becoming the Saviour of sinners, Jesus Himself has trodden this path. He humbled Himself (Phil. ii. 8) when He bare the penalty of death that the sinner deserved, and now God "giveth grace to the humble" (1 Pet. v. 5), to those who will take their true place before Him, as having sinned and perverted that which is right. To such the interpreter can say on God's part, "I have found a ransom" (Job xxxiii. 24); "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's" (ver. 25).

But God, who fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich empty away, has placed side by side with this happy picture of deliverance and blessing, a most solemn example of divine warning and displeasure. The gospel is preached to those that are afar off, and to them that are nigh (Eph. ii. 17), and the word to those that have been brought outwardly nigh, as Christendom has been, is "toward thee,

goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou shalt be cut off" (Rom. xi. 22).

Gehazi, the servant of God's prophet, had a position of privilege that was unique in that day. Associated with the man who had the divine testimony in Israel, he has a share in the giving, and raising from death, of the Shunammite's son as well as the multiplication of the loaves and corn to the people (2 Kings iv.). He also was with the prophet at the time, if he was not actually the "messenger" to bear the word of healing to Naaman. But vanity and the love of money—a root of every evil (1 Tim. vi. 10)—lead him to falsify the grace of the God of Israel, expressed to this stranger, and the prophet has the melancholy experience of seeing the fresh springs of joy and healing corrupted in Naaman's heart, as he starts away to his own land. Unless one had faith in God that He who had begun a good work in the Assyrian captain would complete it, we might well feel saddened and distressed that this soul that had so lately learnt that blessing from God was "without money and without price" (Isa. lv. 1) should have had his heart chilled by the reversal of the prophet's message. Who can tell if after all the mule's burden of earth was used on his return? (2 Kings v. 17).

Gehazi's heart being set upon gain, he became blind to every other consideration. But there is one thing most striking about the narrative,

and that is, that the moment his object is achieved, he has the conscience of a thief, and bestows his silver and garments in the "secret place" (ver. 24). The attractiveness of sin is lost as soon as it is committed. "Ye shall be as gods" seemed so fair; but the moment the sin and disobedience was committed, the first pair learned that they were "naked" in the eyes of God and of one another. Who would envy Gehazi his success obtained by lying and deceit? Hardened by unbelief and deceived by Satan, he comes and stands again before his master. He meets the prophet's searching question again with untruth, but he has to learn to his own confusion that neither God nor the prophet was deceived, though he had been, and that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7). He had desired Naaman's money and apparel; he gets also his leprosy. He is numbered with the company of the "many lepers in Israel" (Luke iv. 27), but with him is the added judgment that it should "cleave to him, and to his seed for ever,"—a suggestion, we may surely say, of the endless doom that awaits those who neglect, refuse, or corrupt the grace of God as it is now expressed in the gospel of Christ. We next meet him, a sycophant in the king's presence (and such a king!) (see 2 Kings viii. 4); and there he passes off the scene, a hopeless leper, striving apparently to stifle the accusings of a bad conscience with the pleasures of the world.

What a warning and a lesson for us! If it be with the lips only we draw near to God, and the heart be far from Him (Matt. xv. 8), after having been brought outwardly near and in a place of privilege, how shall we stand before a greater than Elisha "in that day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ?" (Rom. ii. 16). It will be only to hear that awful word, "Depart" (Matt. vii. 21-23). To any such we would urge, "Repent, and believe the gospel" (Mark i. 15).

F. L.

The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

LECTURE 2.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace"
(Heb. iv. 16).

IN considering the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, we should never forget that this gracious office is not added as necessary to give effect to His atoning work. On the contrary, we are told that He for ever sat down on the right hand of God, because He had by one offering (and by that alone) perfected for ever them that are sanctified. We are also told that we are sanctified by the will of God through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all

(Heb. x. 10, 12, 14). Therefore the believer is both sanctified and perfected for ever by the one offering of Jesus upon the tree ; hence the people for whom He exercises the office of priesthood, are both perfected for ever and sanctified before His priestly functions in heaven are active on their behalf.

The vail having been rent from the top to the bottom, and Jesus having gone into heaven by His own blood, He, the risen glorified Man, now appears before the face of God for us ; and we, by the Spirit, in virtue of His blood, and because He is there, enter into the holiest, and realise what it is to be there. We are not *trying* to get near, for we *are* near.

In Him we most assuredly are, as other scriptures show ; but because of the blood that speaks to us and for us, and because Jesus is there as Priest, we simply and happily go into the presence of God.

Let us draw near.

As we are told, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness (or liberty) to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . and having an High Priest over the house of God ; let us draw near." And observe, it is also added that we thus draw near *not* to be washed and to have guilt removed, but, on the contrary, we "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." In other words, it is

now our unspeakable privilege to enter into the holiest of all, in conscious nearness to God, for communion and worship, because our sins are remitted, our consciences purged, the vail rent, and Jesus in resurrection triumph and ascension glory, gone in there by His own blood, and there engaged as a merciful and faithful High Priest continually on our behalf.

In looking now at the teaching of Scripture on the functions of Jesus as our great High Priest, it is clear that His place for its exercise is in the heavenlies—for us, no doubt; yea, for the feeblest believer, for the weakest in the faith, as the precious words of the Holy Ghost plainly set forth—for “all that come unto God by Him.” His priesthood was not formally exercised on earth, however sweetly the loving heart of Jesus flowed out toward His own; “for if He were on earth He should not be a priest, seeing there are priests that offer gifts according to the law . . . But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry” (Heb. viii. 4-6). Our High Priest, then, blessed be His name, is in heaven; and among other perfections of His office, He is not a standing but a sitting Priest, *set* on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (Heb. viii. 1).

The Order of Melchisedec.

He is also a High Priest “after the order of Melchisedec”; that is, not a changeable priest

hood, like Aaron's, which did not continue by reason of death, but made with an oath and set up in perpetuity; as it is written, "The Lord *swore* and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. vii. 21). He is thus engaged officially also, not as those of old who were compassed with infirmity, but as one "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," and who did not need to offer a sacrifice for Himself. Hence we read, "The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity, but the word of the oath, *which was since the law*, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." He is, moreover, like Melchisedec, a royal Priest, both King and Priest, which Aaron was not; for in millennial times "He shall sit as a Priest upon His throne" (Zech. vi. 13).

He is also like Melchisedec, a blessing Priest, who brought forth bread and wine to Abraham after his battles were over, and blessed him; so will our precious Lord not only refresh and cheer our hearts by the ministry of His own grace, after all our conflicts here are ended, but will make us sweetly realise throughout all eternity that we are the objects of His unchanging and everlasting blessing.

But while Jesus the Son of God will be for ever our blessing Priest, and in the day of Israel's glory will be both their King and Priest, He now exercises on our behalf the Aaronic func-

tions. While the High Priest's order is that of Melchisedec, being established by oath, perpetual and unchangeable, He is in some respects, as to His present activities, the antitype of Aaron, in appearing now in the presence of God for us. He is thus before the face of God for us, ever caring for and ministering to us.

If we turn to Exodus xxviii., we shall there see blessedly illustrated by the types drawn by the Holy Ghost, something of the meaning of Christ's being in the presence of God for us. The whole chapter is full of the deepest possible interest, and profoundly charming and instructive; but at present we can only look at a few leading points. Let us not forget that all these things were according to the pattern which God showed Moses in the mount, and that Bezaleel was energised by no less power than that of the Holy Ghost to fashion them. We can only take a brief glance at some of those glorious and beautiful shadows of our most blessed Lord:—

“And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, thou shalt engrave the stones with the names of the children of Israel; and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial. And thou shalt make ouches of gold; and two chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten wreathen chains to the ouches. And

thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work ; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it ; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine-twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be being doubled ; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set it in settings of stones, even four rows of stones . . . they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet ; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. And thou shalt make upon the breastplate chains at the ends of wreathen work of pure gold. And thou shalt make upon the breastplate two rings of gold. . . . And they shall bind the breastplate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim : and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord : and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually. . . . And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre ; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in their holy gifts ; and it shall always be upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord " (Exod. xxviii. 9-38).

Power and Love.

Observe, in these types, that the names of the children of Israel were engraved both on the onyx stones and in the breastplate. In the former they are looked at collectively; in the latter, individually. In one sense the Church, which is His body, or the saints looked at in their unity, must always be presented in Him who is their Head before God; while on the other hand, as the smallest tribe in Israel, as well as the greatest, was represented by a separate jewel and distinct engraving, so each believer now is always kept before the face of God—held up as the shoulders show us (the place of strength), by His almighty power, as well as by His perfect love, as the breastplate worn over the *heart* sets forth. Each precious stone being enclosed in gold seems to imply that we are thus kept before our God in Christ, who is our subsisting righteousness—"made the righteousness of God in Him."

But observe also that the shoulder pieces are connected, divinely connected (gold being the emblem of divine righteousness), by two golden chains of wreathen work of pure gold, to assure us that the almightiness of Jesus the Son of God, and His perfect love, both combine to preserve us in righteousness and acceptance in Himself continually before the face of God. And concerning the breastplate, we find that it was also

tied underneath with a lace of blue to the rings of the ephod, that it might never slip away from the High Priest's heart ; so that the type of Him, the loving One, who is " the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," might be most carefully preserved. Hence we read that—

" Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment UPON HIS HEART, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial *before the Lord* continually Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel UPON HIS HEART *before the Lord* continually."

But there is another point to be noticed before passing from this chapter—the golden plate on which was engraved " Holiness to the Lord," which Aaron wore on a lace of blue in the forefront of the mitre " always," that he might bear the iniquity of their holy things. And surely it is the sense of our shortcomings, defects in our service, and in our most solemn acts of worship, that tend to cast us down, and would even perhaps sap our confidence, did we not see that we are always presented before God in and by Him who is holiness to the Lord, and that our service is alone acceptable to God through Him. As it was the priest's office to pluck away the crop and feathers of a sacrifice of burnt-offering of fowls, and to burn the rest upon the altar, so our adorable Lord is able to take up our holy things, and present what is acceptable to God through Him.

Correspondence.

MR EDITOR,—May I suggest, in answer to the invitation given in the January number, that the difficulty as to the New Jerusalem arises from confusing “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” of Hebrews xii. 22, with the Church, or her future glory as the body and bride of Christ.

Is not “the heavenly Jerusalem” the heavenly rest and glory for which the patriarchs looked? “A city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. xi. 10); “for He has prepared for them a city” (ver. 16), and they, of course, never awaited the Church of God, Christ’s body, either in its present condition or future glory.*

Still, of Christians it is also true surely, when viewed in their pilgrim aspect, that “here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. xiii. 14).

Is not this the home of God’s elect? Jerusalem above . . . which is our mother (Gal. iv. 26, N.T. and R.V.), and none but a Romanist would say the Church is our mother. If then the Holy Jerusalem of Revelation xxi. 10 is the Church in millennial glory, she cannot be the heavenly Jerusalem of Hebrews xi. and xii.

* True, they did not await it in order to form part of it and yet they did, and still do, await the time of its glory to receive the promise (Heb. xi. 39, 40).—ED.

I think it will help in the understanding of this important and interesting question, to see the difference between *a* (not *the*) heavenly calling and the calling of the Church, about which there is much confusion in many minds. Doubtless all the elect of Old Testament times shared in the heavenly calling, and will have a part in the heavenly glory, being "children of the resurrection" by the Lord's own word. Would not "the holy city Jerusalem" therefore represent, as you suggest in answer to your correspondent, the whole heavenly company in contrast to the earthly?

Of course the body and bride of Christ will be with Him in the heavenly city during the millennial reign, and in her own place of especial nearness; but the question as I understand it is—whether it is the Church, as such, which is *alone* seen in the glory described in Revelation xxi. 10, &c., or whether the description here given is wide enough to cover all the heavenly saints—the city and its inhabitants, if we may so say. And here, we suggest, is the key to what your correspondent calls the Israelitish description of the city.

"It is not presented as the bride, though it be the bride, the Lamb's wife, . . . it is not in the Pauline character of nearness of blessing to Christ" (*Synopsis*, vol. v., page 540).

The distinction would therefore be in the bride of Christ in her Ephesian character; and "the

bride, the Lamb's wife," in the Apocalypse, where she is never seen as "the body" at all; and it is not necessary to seek a distinction between the "city" and the "bride," which are apparently presented in this scripture (Rev. xxi. 9, 10) as one and the same.

If this be so, it is evident that the Church, which is Christ's body and bride, and the bride of the Lamb, are *not* * identical or co-extensive; while the "holy city, new Jerusalem," and "the bride, the Lamb's wife," are. Otherwise would there not be two heavenly Jerusalems?

T. R.

Lyss.—Is the "city" of Revelation xxi. composed of saints belonging to the Church, or also of all Old Testament saints?

If of the latter, how understand Revelation xxi. 9, 10, "Come here, I will show thee the bride. . . . And He . . . showed me the holy city," &c., which treats the bride and the city as though they were identical?

Abraham "waited for the city which has foundations" (New Translation), but this decides nothing as to what saints compose the city. In the Old Testament it is not stated he so looked, and in the Old Testament there is no mention of a "city" being revealed to him.

* We think our correspondent is mistaken here, but we leave the consideration of this point till next month (*D. V.*).
—ED.

It would appear in Hebrews xi., the Holy Spirit describes or interprets his faith in this way, the world at the time of Abraham's call being engrossed with man's city, Babylon (Gen. xi.). In the same way Moses' faith is interpreted as "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

Again, "He hath prepared for them a city." This says nothing as to what saints compose it, but being "prepared for them," would it not imply they did not compose it, but simply "that they without us should not be made perfect"?

Again, those (Rev. xxii. 14) who "go in by the gates into the city;" would not this also imply they did not form part of it? W. J. C.

Fragment.

NO matter what your circumstances are, every act of your life gives you an opportunity to bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. Am I to say, This is not big enough for such a great personage as I. God did not mean to give you a great thing to do—*Live to God just where you are*; everything is your opportunity, and is part of *God's* plan of life. I am in a body of sin and death to show out that with all that Satan can do with us, he can't destroy the life given us. G. V. W.

Hints on Ezekiel.

Chap. iv.—THE SIEGE.

HERE the judgment of God is pronounced upon Jerusalem itself, and not only upon Israel generally. None had been more highly favoured, and none more guilty in the sight of God. With what astonishment must the captives by the river Chebar have watched Ezekiel's movements as he portrayed the siege of that city of solemnities, and as day by day, first for 390 days, and then for 40, he bore the iniquity of the houses of Israel and Judah.

The dates here alluded to have given rise to much controversy, but it is clear at any rate that from the death of Solomon to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar is a period of 390 years, or almost exactly so. The 40 years would seem to refer to the reign of Solomon himself, when that idolatry commenced, which, in spite of abundant prophetic warning, resulted in the deportation to Babylon of both the ten tribes and the two. There seems no reason to doubt that this is what the Spirit of God had in view in this remarkable command, for clearly it was for the sin of idolatry that this judgment fell upon the people: "I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever" (1 Kings xi. 30-40).

But still more must the prophet enter into the

terrible reality of Israel's low estate. A faithful Daniel refused to defile himself with the Gentile monarch's meat; even in Babylon's court he maintained the strictest separation from all that the law of Moses forbade. But here at the bidding of the Lord Himself, Ezekiel, no less faithful than Daniel, though in different circumstances, is made to eat the most revolting food, thus illustrating in his own person the degraded condition of the children of Israel eating their defiled bread among the Gentiles. Ezekiel, though personally well-pleasing to the Lord, is thus made to taste the sorrow and the shame of the nation's guilt. None but the perfect One, the true Son of man, could enter into it in all its depth, drinking to its deepest dregs the cup of divine judgment, when He who knew no sin was made sin, that not only repentant Israel but any and every contrite sinner might be eternally blessed. He only could offer a complete atonement, and thus satisfy the infinite righteousness of a thrice holy God. Yet is it not beautiful to see Ezekiel in his measure following in his blessed Master's footsteps, not, we need hardly add, in any sense whatever bearing their sin atoningly, for this the Lord of glory alone could do, but identifying himself with the nation of Israel in their low estate. Ezekiel might be shielded from what he most shrank from, but not so our adorable and blessed Lord and Saviour. "If it be possible, let this cup pass

from Me," was immediately followed by those words of eternal and infinite obedience to the Father and love to us, "nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done." Eternal praises to His peerless name!

Chap. v.—THE BARBER'S RAZOR.

By means of another type the prophet is led to set forth the almost total destruction of the population of Jerusalem. A third part was to perish in the city by fire, pestilence, and famine; a third part, by the sword; and a third part, to be scattered to the winds (vers. 1-5, 12).

The sorrowful reason is then given: Jerusalem, set in the midst of the nations to be a witness for the true God in opposition to idols, had exceeded those very nations in wickedness (vers. 5-8). Long and patiently had Jehovah dealt with them; now there was no remedy: the heathen around would witness with astonishment the unprecedented sight of a nation visited with such unsparing judgment by the very God they professed to worship.

In passing, we may notice this unanswerable evidence of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The historical and religious records of the Jewish nation condemn them at every turn. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms are one continuous exposure of their sin and disobedience. Would any nation have composed

or collected evidence so condemnatory of itself? And this is what Scripture is from first to last, so far as man is concerned—a sorrowful record of sin and failure, commencing with that first act of disobedience in the garden of Eden, and culminating in that crowning act of wickedness at Calvary. The first man's sin and ruin is complete; but God has been glorified by the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, who by His death has not only vindicated His character and majesty, but brings rebel sinners who believe right home to God.

In God's government of His earthly people, they were to be scattered and their city laid waste. In the pride of their hearts they still imagine that they are dispersed among the nations to be a witness of the truth, though guilty now of an infinitely greater crime than that which necessitated the Babylonian captivity, even the rejection and murder of their Messiah. No; God's judgments are upon them for their sin, and worse trials are yet to come: "I the Lord have spoken it" (vers. 13, 15, 17).

Chap. vi.—THE MOUNTAINS OF ISRAEL.

The judgment would not be confined to Jerusalem; it would reach to the mountains, hills, and valleys, and thus "ye shall know that I am the Lord." But a little remnant would be spared, who with broken hearts would loathe themselves and repent of all the evils they

had committed: "And they shall know that I am the Lord, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them" (ver. 10). None would be able to hide from the eyes of Jehovah. If the sword should fall upon those that were near, the pestilence would as certainly overtake those far off.

Chap. vii.—THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE LAND.

This chapter closes this first series of prophetic woes. The judgment which was to commence at Jerusalem (chap. v.), and to spread to the mountains of Israel (chap. vi.), is here seen reaching to every corner of the land. The sinful idolatry of the people had reached its climax: there was no remedy possible; the end was come, and the morning of their day of trouble had dawned. All that is here so graphically described has been fulfilled to the very letter in the history of the guilty nation. Only we must notice that the prophet confines himself to the results of the sin of idolatry, and terrible as all the suffering of the past has been, worse, even hitherto unparalleled trial, is yet to be theirs, because of the far greater sin of the rejection and murder of their Messiah.

The time, then, for Jehovah's judgment of the guilty people was come. "Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee; and I will

judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations (*i.e.*, idolatry)" (ver. 8). So great would be the pressure of sorrow and desolation, that all that naturally and usually engages the attention of man would be paralyzed; trade would be at a standstill, "Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn: for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof" (ver. 12.). Their seasons of national rejoicing would be blighted; the year of jubilee (Lev. xxiii.), with all its social and family joys, would lapse: "The seller shall not return to that which is sold, although they were yet alive" (ver. 13). The trumpet's blast, that in days gone by had summoned the people to the worship of Jehovah would sound in vain; nor would its rallying notes inspire them with confidence in the outstretched arm of Jehovah (see Num. x. 9): "They have blown the trumpets, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for My wrath is upon all the multitude thereof" (ver. 14). So far were they from being remembered before the Lord their God for deliverance and salvation from their enemies as in days of yore, now because of their abominable transgressions there would be "the sword without, and the pestilence and famine within" (ver. 15). The few that should escape these strokes of divine judgment, would be like doves of the valley, lost amidst the desolate mountains, mourning in their solitude;

“they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity” (ver. 16).

Sorrowful indeed is the contrast between all this and those bright and joyous scenes of Miriam's exultation, “Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea” (Exod. xv. 21). But then Jehovah had been their defender, and had they not abandoned Him for idols? And what could *they* do for them now in the extremity of their distress? “They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be as uncleanness: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it was the stumbling-block of their iniquity” (ver. 19). Yes, their idols were nothing but material silver and gold: eyes they might have, but they could not see; and ears, but they could not hear. Idolatry was indeed the stumbling-block of Jewish iniquity.

But this was not all. There was a spot where God had chosen to place His name—a palace built “not for man, but for the Lord God;” there the glory of the Lord had shone in earlier times, but now it was polluted with idols: “As for the beauty of His ornament,

He set it in majesty: but they made the images of their abominations, and of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from me" (ver. 20). If idolatry was so intolerable in guilty Israel, will God endure it in still more guilty Christendom? Let the judgment about to fall on Babylon the Great, that mother of ecclesiastical "harlots and abominations of the earth," give the solemn answer (Rev. xvii., xviii., xix.).

Finally, the desperate condition of the people is graphically described—the land full of bloody crimes, the city full of violence, the worst of the heathen in possession of their houses, the holy places defiled: "Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, and there shall be none. Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour" (vers. 25, 26). Worse than all, the heavens are now as brass above their heads, and all refuge on the part of God fails them: "Then shall they seek a vision of the prophet; but the law shall perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients. The king shall mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with desolation, and the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deserts will I judge them; and they shall know that I am the Lord" (vers. 26, 27).

Solemn indeed is the thought that the Lord should be known by the judgments which He

would execute, not upon the heathen merely, but even upon His own people! How literally all was fulfilled! Here closes this first series of prophetic warnings.

Conformity to Christ.

THE more you look into Scripture, the more you will see how clear it is. How does the resurrection of the saints take place? We shall be raised in glory—we go in *glory* before the judgment-seat. How can you have a man in glory, and raise a question about judgment there? God will have you to be conformed to the image of His Son. There has Paul been these eighteen hundred years in heaven; are you going to take him out for judgment?

There is the perfect work accomplished, and hereby also “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Your responsibility is not mixed up with your acceptance, but with your glorifying God. Quickened and born of God, you are responsible to act accordingly. If you were my children, I should expect you to behave as my children. You must first be children. All our responsibilities, beloved friends, flow from the place we are in. Duty flows from the place we are in. When you are a child of God, your duty

to act as one begins. It will not stop, of course, in heaven. It is the consequence of the place I am brought into. And now I have it in a poor earthen vessel, but being sealed by the Holy Ghost, I can therefore look with delight and joy for Christ's coming. His time is best ; " God is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The saint can rejoice in the trial of his faith. But in it all, the Christian is looking for the coming of Christ. See how a mother watches for her child, because she loves him.

The Christian believes the blessed Son of God became a man on purpose to be able to die and suffer for him ! He has been judged for me, has put away my sins, and I say, " Oh ! that I could see Him as He is ! " And more, when I *do* see Him, I shall be like Him ! God's purpose is not merely to save you by Christ, but to bless you with Christ ! We are " predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." " As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy ; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly ; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." How can we think of such a thing ? And if I know that it is *grace*, as it is expressed in Ephesians, " that in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in

His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus," I see that He must do something *wonderful*. If I am reasoning from what I am, it would be impossible ; but if I am reasoning from God's work, if He has given His own blessed Son to be a curse for me, I can expect *anything*. And I *do* expect to be like Christ! Why? He has told me so. "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

See how God has taken care to show me what sin is. But see how He has taken care, if through grace your hearts hate sin, to show you how He has made an end of it, and brought in eternal righteousness. You are guilty? Very well—you are justified by blood! Defiled?—cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ His Son! You have offended God?—you are perfectly forgiven! "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Well now, says God, you must trust My love. You cannot have thoroughly happy blessed affections with God till your conscience is purged. Let your father be the kindest in the place, and the child know it, yet if he has been naughty he will skulk away. He gets a good conscience, and will run into his arms. When the conscience is purged, who did it? Why, God did it! He has made me His child, given me the very same name Christ has, called me His *son*, and "therefore the

world knoweth me not, because it knew Him not."

Oh, beloved friends, have you got the consciousness that God has interfered on your behalf; that God has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all; that Christ has come to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself? Have you the consciousness of *that*? Hating the sin of course; but have you known and believed the love God has toward you, and the efficacy of the work that love has done?

Beloved friends, if Christ were to come *to-night*, and I don't know when He may—at even, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning (it is like a man that has his hand on the door to open it at any moment),—if He were to come to-night, where are you? Would you say, "Oh, that is the Lord that gave Himself for me, come to take me to Himself?" Or is there some fear in your heart about Him? Well, if there is, you have not got hold of the perfectness of His work in putting away your sins. Would you *like* to be with Jesus? Can your heart say, "I am a poor helpless thing; but if He hung on the cross for me, I am *certain* of His love. I cannot doubt the perfectness of His love"?

Through grace, I say, your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost; do not you do anything to grieve Him. Whatever you do, do it heartily as to the Lord. Do it in the Spirit; it does not matter what it is. A child wanting to please his

father, would want to please him in the trifles. A holy life comes with practice. It is perfect peace, perfect joy, because I am waiting for Jesus to receive me to Himself; and a perfect measure of practice, because I see that I should be more and more conformed to Him now, if I am to be like Him when I see Him as He is.

The Lord give you to be able to say, Come, Lord Jesus! To you who believe, He is precious!

J. N. D.

The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

LECTURE II. (*continued*).

WITH regard to the beautiful materials with which the breast-plate was made, we have, in the "gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen," the personal glories of the great High Priest typically set forth. So immediately did failure and sin come in after the introduction of the priesthood, that there is no reason to believe that these garments of glory and beauty were ever worn before the Lord. But we can, I trust, easily see how all will be made good, when the true Melchisedec sits as a Priest upon His throne, and all the twelve tribes are set in terrestrial

glory in their proper lots in the land ; and with what unspeakable glory all these typical blessednesses will shine forth in moral worth, and unfading excellence, in their true Messiah, when He reigns before His ancients gloriously.

We can, also, happily enter into and enjoy the precious lessons these types and shadows read to us as to the meaning of that blessed One having entered into heaven itself by His own blood, and now appearing before the face of God for us. And how touching to the feeblest believer to find that he is included amongst those who are thus so wondrously blessed ! for it is for "all who come unto God by Him." This surely every believer can say, even the weakest babe in the faith, that *he comes unto God by Christ*.

I. The first practical lesson for our hearts suggested by the contemplation of the glorious High Priest in heaven for us, is that He both demands and warrants our—

unwavering confidence.

Hence the apostle says, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession," or *let us hold fast the confession*.

This does not say, "hold fast your faith," or "hold on in faithfulness," blessed and important as it is to continue both in faith and faithfulness ; but seeing that Christ has so taken hold of us, that, whether we are thinking of Him or not, He

is faithful—He changes not—that His merciful and unwearied heart is continually taken up with us, in presenting us always before the face of God—we cannot hesitate to confess Him as our life, righteousness, never-failing security and hope, spite of all the changes within and around in this chequered and sinful scene. Let us then “hold fast the confession.” It is His faithfulness, His grace, His abundant goodness, which is the ground of true confidence; and especially when we see that Jesus, our great High Priest, is presenting us in divine righteousness, in His own acceptance before God continually.

Dear Christian brethren, we do well thus to contemplate the moral perfections and excellences of our High Priest. When we grow cold and forgetful of Him, does He forget us? Never. Nothing can and nothing will ever cause Him for one moment to cease to bear us up before our God in the perfectness of His unchanging love, and in the almightiness of His everlasting strength. What an unspeakable basis of rest and confidence our God has given us in Christ Jesus!

“I change, He changes not :
 My Christ can never die ;
 His love, not mine, the resting-place,
 His truth, not mine, the tie.
 I know He liveth now
 At God’s right hand above ;
 I know the throne on which He sits,
 I know *His truth and love.*”

2. The second point to notice in the functions of our precious Priest in heaven is—

His sympathy.

For “we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of *our infirmities*.” Observe it is not sins, but infirmities ; for surely that holy One could have no sympathy with us in sin, nor could we wish Him to ; besides, we know that He suffered for sins. But “infirmities” are short of sins and transgressions. He knows that often our spirits are willing, but the flesh is weak ; that again and again we break down through natural weakness in our efforts to serve and glorify Him. We would praise Him with untiring voice, but soon grow weary. We are sometimes sleeping when we ought to be praying ; and are overcome with fatigue in His blessed service, when our inner man would delight to go much farther. But Jesus knows all about us. “He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are but dust.” He understands our frailty and our feebleness ; and His heart is touched with deep consideration for us.

He knows, too, what we are, not only as knowing all things, but as having lived here among men, and having as perfect man thorough personal acquaintance with every necessity of His people in this poor world. And He is certainly not less mindful of His own dear ones *now* than *then*. If the sorrowing hearts of Martha

and Mary drew forth tears of sympathy from their loving Saviour when He knew that in a little while Lazarus would be again by their side in all the vigour of health and brotherly affection, though He has changed His place from earth to heaven, His heart cannot love less on that account. How sweet then to be able to look up to Him, when conscious of our own infirmities, and fully to count upon Him as a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother—

“ Whose heart is filled with tenderness,
Whose very name is Love.”

We have not then an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but who is—

“ Touched with a sympathy within,
And knows our feeble frame,”

now in the presence of God for us—

“ And, though ascended, feels afresh
What every member bears.”

3. Our High Priest is also our—

Succourer in temptation.

“ In that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted ” (Heb. ii. 18). His watchful eye never taken off us, His heart ever caring for us, and thus being objects of His care and activity, there is not an advance of Satan toward us that escapes His vigilance, not a snare laid, not a fiery dart hurled, not a wile projected

against the feeblest of His saints, but all is open and manifest to His all-seeing eye; and, blessed be His name, He is able to succour us. He has known terrible temptation Himself. The foul breath of the adversary must have been *exquisite suffering to His holy heart*; and it is true that He did suffer thus, for "He was in all points tempted like as we are," sin excepted.

He is then able to defeat Satan, to strengthen us to resist him, to keep us from being carried away by him, to preserve our feet from being entangled in the meshes of his net, to uphold us lest we fall, to deliver us from his wiles, to strengthen our faith to quench his fiery darts, and to enable us to stand fast in Christ, to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. How comforting, then, is the thought that there is a perfect One in the glory who resisted Satan in temptation, and through death rendered him null who had the power of death, that is, the devil, who triumphed over him in resurrection from among the dead, and who assures us that "He is able to succour them that are tempted."

4. Our Lord in glory as our great High Priest is deeply —

concerned about our need.

He is constantly saving us from ten thousand difficulties and perplexities which cross our path. In this we see He saves to the uttermost or

right on to the end. Having saved our souls, saved us from the wrath to come, He saves us day by day from the things of men, and Satan, and the world, which sometimes threaten to swallow us up. For this, too, He is ever living to intercede for us. His intercession, then, as our High Priest is not about our sins, but about our need. We are therefore enjoined to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of *need*" (Heb. iv. 16).

Oh how precious is the fact that Jesus, having saved us from the wrath to come by the blood of the cross, is now pleading in heaven for us about our present *need*! As the Captain of our salvation, He is leading us on our way, and, unlike other captains, has actually gone before His soldiers to break down every impediment for them, and now as our great High Priest ever intercedes for us with God. He never forsakes, never forgets us, never slumbers nor sleeps, but is ever active on our behalf, ever merciful and faithful, ever living to make intercession for them that come unto God by Him. He will thus carry us through every difficulty thrown in our way by men and Satan, and bring us off more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Oh the blessedness of having such a great High Priest to sustain our hearts in happy holy liberty in God's presence! One, too, who can

sympathise with us as to our infirmities, succour us in temptation, and daily save us through His ever-living and all-prevailing intercession. How unspeakably precious to be able to look up, and to see that no weakness nor failure on our part—no, not even eternity itself—can erase the graving of our names from His heart! And when we would be easily cast down with humbling views of our weakness, forgetfulness, and shortcomings, oh! the unutterable blessedness of looking up and seeing that infinitely loving, faithful heart ever engaged about us, and ever presenting us before the face of God in all the virtue and fragrance of an everlasting anointed High Priest.

And if the precious ointment, with its exquisite perfume, when poured upon the head of Aaron, ran down to the skirts of his garments, surely the precious savour of Christ must, by the Holy Ghost, rest upon every member of His body. It was the same precious anointing oil which was poured upon the sons of Aaron as upon Aaron himself; and so the same Holy Ghost that Jesus received of the Father has also been given to and has anointed those who are through grace brought into everlasting relationship with Him. But this leads us to the consideration of God's present priests on earth, which will occupy us on another occasion if the Lord will.

Meanwhile, let us not forget, that because

the veil is rent and Jesus is gone into heaven with His own blood, that there we are now, and there is our sanctuary. Because of the blood, and because our High Priest is there, we have liberty to enter into the holiest at all times, and abide there and worship.

As we sometimes sing—

“ ’Tis finished ! here our souls can rest,
His work can never fail ;
By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,
We pass within the veil.

“ Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood,
Before the throne we prostrate fall,
And worship Thee, O God.”

Correspondence.

DEAR BROTHER,—Respecting your question in the February number of *The Christian's Library*, “Are the City and the Bride exactly co-extensive?” please allow me to call attention to a few facts of Scripture on the subject.

It seems to be of primary importance to hold fast the truth that the Church, which is being formed during this period of grace, has an unique place in the thoughts and intentions of God. He is calling out now a people for His name, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles.

And the persons thus gathered are being builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. ii. 22). In another New Testament aspect these same persons are said to be members of Christ's body; and the aggregate of these members will form the bride of the Lamb. As such they will share His glory with Him when He occupies the throne of His father David.

That Old Testament saints have not the same place as the New may be gathered from John iii. 28, 29. John the Baptist was the friend of the Bridegroom, not the bride. Further, according to Hebrews xi. 39, 40, there is some better thing foreseen for us who constitute the Church.

Having seen the special place the Church has now, we have next to ascertain if this distinction is maintained in heaven. Perhaps Revelation xix. 6-9 will help us. There we are introduced (ver. 7) to a class of persons who are calling upon one another to rejoice because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. These are not the wife, then, but friends called to the marriage. They are therefore distinct from the bride. We may probably gather further proof as to this from Hebrews xii. 22, 23. There we come "to myriads of angels, the general assembly," then "the Church of the first-born who are written in heaven," and later "the spirits of just men made perfect." Here again we have "the Church of the first-born" presented as a distinct class from "the spirits of just men

made perfect." Where, then, have we room for supposing that these separate classes will lose their distinctive character and merge into one in the millennium.

But there is also mention made here of the heavenly Jerusalem in contrast to the earthly one, I suppose. Is not *this* the city for which Abraham looked, whose maker and builder is God? His dwelling in this world was a tent, but he looked on to a city—a fixed and ordered scene of bliss, which should last for ever. That this heavenly city is *not* the Church, or bride, seems clear from the fact that they are here plainly distinguished from each other.

John in the Revelation speaks of the "New Jerusalem" both in the eternal state and in the millennium (chap. xxi. 2 and 10 respectively). But in both cases the city is the bride of Christ, and God's dwelling-place. Now *to have* a place to dwell in and *to be* a dwelling-place are two very different things. Old Testament saints looked for a city. We shall be a city—according to the figures used—but we shall not be the dwelling-place of Old Testament saints surely.

Thus in the words of another, "When the apostle Paul speaks of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, he means the scene of future heavenly blessedness; whereas when John speaks of the new Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God, he means not *where*, but *what* we are to be."

As to the Israelitish description of the city. Is it not because the Church is seen in its governmental aspect, "as founded in connection with, and an offspring of the Jewish and earthly system, just as the child was born of the woman" (Rev. xii. 5). Hence we have twelve gates. The gate was the place of judicial administration, and twelve is administrative perfection in man. The names of the twelve tribes are on the gates, and the Lord promised the apostles they should sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Matt. xix. 28 ; Luke xxii. 29). The foundations are not the patriarchs, but the twelve apostles of the Lamb. "They were the foundation of all Christian governmental and administrative power." The truths they taught were the foundations on which the Church is built. Hence the word "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. ii. 20, iii. 5)—"prophets" of the New Testament of course.

Here, then, have we not sufficient reason to account for the figures used, and to remove existing difficulties? The fact is, much of the language of Revelation xxi. is that of symbol, and to understand it one's mind must be divested of the notion that a literal city is meant. We must conceive, rather, of the whole company of New Testament saints, reigning in perfect purity, security, and happiness in glory, while bearing at the same time certain relations to the millennial earth.

Further, it is helpful to bear in mind the fact that New Testament saints, in addition to being a city, have a *place* or abode prepared for them by the One who has gone away for that purpose (cf. John xiv.). Would the city that Old Testament saints looked for be of a similar nature to this?

Does not what we get, from Revelation xxii. 6 to the end, deal more with general principles and refer to the present time rather than millennium times?

Trusting you will excuse this long letter, I am, dear brother, yours in Christian love,

W.J.H.

THE mind sometimes becomes confused by connecting scriptures which in reality should be considered separately.

1. **Galatians iv. 26.**—Here “Jerusalem which is above” is placed in contrast with “Jerusalem which now is.” It is the contrast between the two principles of law and promise. “Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children,” describes the state of the Jew under law; but “Jerusalem which is above is free, which is our mother,” describes the state of present liberty in Christ. The two systems are here placed in contrast.

2. **Hebrews xi. and xiii.**—In this epistle the saints are viewed in their pilgrim character: they

are passing through the wilderness to their heavenly rest. Now they are, so to speak, in tabernacles; then they will be in a city which hath foundations. The contrast is between the earthly pilgrimage and the heavenly rest (xi. 9-16). In that heavenly rest all the glorified saints will share, both of Old Testament and New. The city of Hebrews xi. and xiii. is clearly not the Church, for Abraham, &c., are in it, and most of our readers will admit that they are not in the Church. God has provided "some better thing for us" (Christians), though we shall share with Abraham, &c., the joys of that city of God.

Hebrews xii. 22-24.—This passage demands special attention. It is the only place where the expression "heavenly Jerusalem" occurs; it is likewise the only place where the Church is mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews. And so far from the heavenly Jerusalem and the Church being identical, they are clearly distinguished in this passage, "Ye are come . . . unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, **and** to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly,* **and** to the Church of the first-born," &c.

The contrast here lies between the law (Sinai) and its terrors, which belonged to the Jewish state of things, and that to which the Christian is brought. As Christians we stand now in

It is thus the passage should read.

connection with that order of things which will be fully seen in millennial days. The Christian has to do with these things now by faith. We are not come to Mount Sinai (the law), but *we are come* to Mount Sion (royal grace). During the millennium "the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory" (Ps. cii. 16), the time to favour her will then have come, the Lord will declare His praise in Jerusalem; this will be the earthly part of Messiah's kingdom. But besides this there will be "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." The mention of Sion on the earth led the thoughts to that heavenly city of God's own building. But this introduces us to heaven and heavenly inhabitants; angelic hosts will be there, "the general assembly"; the Church, too, as a company distinct from all others, "the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven"; God is there, not seen in His character of grace as now, but as Judge of all, for in fact the time of judgment will then be come; another company, too, will be there, some of whom had received most honourable mention in chapter xi., seen then not as disembodied spirits, but perfected in glory, &c. &c.

The heavenly Jerusalem seems in this passage to be a somewhat general expression, comprising—at any rate connecting—all the constituent parts of the heavenly country thereafter mentioned. These things will be displayed in all

their beauty and glory in that bright millennial day, but they are all made good to our faith *now*. The new covenant has not yet been established, but as Christians we are already come to Jesus, the Mediator of it. Also are we come to that precious blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel, for it cries for pardon instead of judgment. ED.

Who are referred to as "taken" and "left" in Matthew xxiv. 40, 41; Luke xvii. 34?

These passages teach of the coming of the Son of man in judgment. Indeed, wherever the coming of the Son of man is spoken of, it is always a question of judgment. Matthew xxv. 13 looks like an exception, for in the preceding verses it is the Bridegroom coming, and the saints going in with Him to the marriage. But the last line of verse 13 is an interpolation; "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour," and there it stops.

The Lord is here showing that the coming of the Son of man will be just like what happened in the days of Noah. The flood came and took them all away. Who were taken away? The sinners. So shall it be when the Son of man comes, "the one shall be taken and the other left." Taken where? To judgment. Left where? For blessing on the earth.

Outline of the Gospel of John.

No. 1.—THE WORD.

(Chaps. i.-ii. 22.)

IN this gospel, divine life and relationship are revealed in the Eternal Word, who is Himself God; then His connection is declared with the creature which received its being through Him, and with men especially, the life in Him being their light—that which gave them moral state according to God.

Man's condition had, however, become chaos and darkness. The cause of this is not stated here, but the fact only, the history of which will be found in Genesis ii. But as the physical world in Genesis i. 2, so here the moral scene is one of darkness. In it the light appears but ineffectually. The *fiat* of God sufficed to call forth light amid material darkness, but man was darkness spiritually, having gone away from God, who is Light and the alone Giver of it. To have light he must return to God, but to return he must have light. His case was therefore irremediable by power. The light was indeed there, but the darkness apprehended it not.

But when all else failed, there was yet a resource in God. In grace and wisdom He brings in another principle, namely, a testimony and faith in it, which, though neither light nor

power, forms a living link between the poor dark creature and Him who is Light. There was a man sent from God, his name John. He came for witness that he might witness concerning the Light, that all might believe through him. The light was to be received in an Object of faith presented to man whatever his darkness and distance from God. Thus the true Light comes to man, and man comes to God by Him to whom a divine witness is rendered, and who coming into the world shines upon every man.

The world into which He came had received its being through Him, but, apart from faith, the world knew Him not. Man was ignorant of his Creator. By His own (the Jewish people) with whom He was in special relationship in the flesh, He was not received. Except for faith the true Light had shone in vain; but the effectual blessing of God rests on those who believe on His name—that is, who believe on Him through a testimony. To such He gives the right to be children of God. They have been born of God.

Viewed as the true Light, He enters the world and shines upon man. And in order to be for blessing to man instead of condemnation, He is presented by a testimony to faith. Now His earthly history in manhood begins: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Becoming man, He is the display of the purpose of the Father's heart to gather a family for Himself according to the perfect pattern of the Son.

The witness therefore is no longer limited to that of John the Baptist, but includes primarily that of the apostles. "We have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father." It was His glory to be in manhood ever the blessed Recipient of the love of such a Father to such a Son, and thus to be the divine and glorious pattern of this new family. He was full of grace and truth, and of His fulness we all have received and grace upon grace. We are not merely born of God, but, however small our measure, we participate in all His moral perfections in manhood, grace being constantly renewed. There is also the special personal grace which brought Him into the line of testimony after John, though preferred before him because the ever existing Object of divine delight.

Hitherto we have had His relations with God and with the creature, especially with man, then the need of witness to Him for faith and blessing, and also, where there was faith, a new relationship formed, Himself the pattern of it. This is now contrasted with the character of the former dispensation. That was Law given by Moses; this introduces grace and truth in the person of Jesus Christ. That veiled the glory of God and forbade approach; this declared Him not merely essential Deity, but the Father according to the fulness and intimacy of the divine affections known to the only-begotten Son, whose glory in

manhood was the expression of it (ver. 14). To Him in this supremely excellent service John also, who was but a voice, bears witness (vers. 19-28).

John's ministry was confined to Israel in its national position, not calling souls out of it; and his baptism with water was for the purpose of manifesting to Israel One whose work nevertheless went wide as the world, and whose existence knew no beginning. It was a new dawn of service for John when he beheld the Spirit descending as a dove from heaven, and it abode upon Him. And he bore witness that this was the Son of God—the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, and He who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. The change from addressing a national company to witnessing of a universal work and eternal person was blessed for John.

But there is still more, for testimony to such an Object is closely linked with communion; and looking at Jesus as He walked, he again says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" What attraction divine glory has when expressed in grace and truth—moral perfectness in manhood! Andrew, one of two attracted by John's adoring exclamation, who followed Jesus and abode with Him that day, first finds his own brother Simon and leads him to Jesus.

The effect of John's witness is to attach these two brothers to the Lord. Different in character,

the individuality of Simon, whom Jesus calls Cephas or Peter, is strongly marked. He does not appear to have been, like Andrew, one of John's disciples. A bold, impetuous man of strong feelings and will, he was probably more inclined to the active business of life here than attracted by John's ascetic path. This, on the contrary, Andrew was—a religious and seeking soul. Both, for opposite reasons, were looking for Messias—Andrew, as desiring the realisation of his hopes; Peter, as conscious afterwards of his own sinful condition. The former displays an earnest, inquiring spirit; the latter is a type of the self-confident, independent man.

These are the fruits of John's ministry: Jesus Himself now seeks two others of a different stamp. The first was Philip, whom the words "Follow Me" suffice to call. Conversant with Scripture (a fact distinguishing those whom Jesus personally finds), and the sick and dying state of Israel revealed in "the law and the prophets," his faith quickly cleaves to Jesus the Son of Joseph, and finds in Him the Great Mediator whose word should heal and save (Deut. xviii. 15-19). Philip finds Nathanael, a man more instructed and precise in his thoughts of Scripture, drawn particularly from the Psalms, not merely from Moses and the prophets, but therefore looking for higher glories and nobler names than Nazareth could boast. Of unblemished life and upright prayerful spirit, it seemed to him

impossible that the Son of God, the King of Israel, nay, even anything good, could come out of Nazareth. A place of bad repute, where a spirit of evil brooded ready to burst forth in pride, hatred of grace, and murderous violence, the divine Saviour surely could not come from thence! The power of evil in the scene, and indeed Nathanael's godliness and knowledge of the Scriptures—all were hindrances to Jewish faith in a humbled Christ. But the word of Jesus quells the storm of doubt and discovers to him One who knew him thoroughly, but was not to be known even from the Scriptures except as He chose to reveal Himself. But in grace He does reveal Himself, and calms the labouring heart, tossed to and fro with conflicting thoughts, and gives instead the heavenly vision of the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.

In fact, these four men are four representative states of soul under the eye of God—the inquiring, the independent, the legal, and, lastly, the man of doubt and difficulty. These four states will be found to underlie much of the teaching in John's gospel.

But a third day dawns, not one of testimony and faith, but a day of signs and manifested glory, in which nature and its relationships have their place. The time, indeed, had not yet come for Jesus to celebrate the marriage-day of Israel's joy; this must be deferred until He establishes

His kingdom in righteousness which cheereth God and man. But at least the power to do so was His even then, yet a power to be used in a way worthy of Him who alone can wield it—a power that cannot be allied with vain forms and empty ordinances. Purification must precede the kingdom of joy. The vessels must be filled with water to the brim in order to have the good wine.

This miracle was done in Cana of Galilee, a district where first the kingdom shall arise (cf. Isa. ix. 1-7; Matt. iv. 12-17). From thence Jesus goes to Jerusalem; for another matter must also occupy His attention—the cleansing of His Father's house, intimately linked as it is with setting up the kingdom (cf. Ps. lxxxiii.-lxxxiv.). His Father's house was not to be a house of merchandise; and though it is certain that the true temple of God was His body, which if destroyed by their wicked act He would raise up in three days, yet while the temple made with hands could legitimately claim to be God's house, He owned it and was jealous for the honour of Him whose great and holy name it bore. For this end did He assert His own divine dignity and power. It was zeal for that house which devoured Him. In this zeal the godly remnant among the Jews shall participate in the coming day (Ps. lxix. 9); but to Him alone belongs the power of resurrection. Nor was it till He had exercised that power in His own

case, that His disciples remembered His words, and believed that the true Christ is the humbled Christ of Psalm lxix., and the risen Christ of John ii. 19.

These two scenes of the marriage in Cana, and the cleansing of the temple at Jerusalem, present the great forms which the earthly blessing will take in the day of Christ's manifestation, namely, the Kingdom and the Sanctuary; while the four called disciples are patterns of those who shall share in it with Him (cf. Ps. cxxxi.-cxxxiv.).

The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

LECTURE III.

Rev. i. 5, 6. 1 Peter ii. 5-8.

THE fact is here plainly stated that all those who are loved by Jesus and washed from their sins in His own blood are *made priests unto God*. They are also called "an holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood." Their life is one of entire dependence and faith, as the apostle so forcibly expresses it: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith

of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

In the typical instruction of Old Testament Scripture we have abundant details as to the characteristics, maintenance, and occupation of priests. We know from the Epistle to the Hebrews how remarkably the Aaronic high priest was a type of Jesus, our great High Priest; and we know also that Aaron's sons *only* were priests, and that they were chosen of God, washed, clothed, consecrated by blood, anointed with oil, and in relationship by birth with the high priest. All pretensions to priesthood, apart from these realities, were accounted false. When any did come forward professing to be priests, and could not trace their genealogy, they were put from the priesthood as polluted (Neh. vii. 64). And when the sons of Korah sought to set aside God's order of priesthood by setting up another of their own, He caused the earth to cleave asunder and swallow them up, and all that appertained to them (Num. xvi. 20).

The order of priests that God now has is composed of those who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus. Such are *made* priests unto God. They need no other qualification than God gives them. The order is divine. They are priests unto God. They are consecrated to the office, *made priests*, and in some striking particulars were remarkably set forth in type by the

sons of Aaron. Let us consider a few of these similarities.

Firstly, Aaron's sons were

priests by the election of God.

God chose them and no others. They were priests unto God by His gracious choice. Of all the tribes and families in Israel, none other than the sons of Aaron could fulfil the office of priesthood; so now it has pleased God to choose those *only* who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus. Such *only* are made nigh to Him, and have liberty to come into His presence to minister in holy things; for "*in Christ Jesus we who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ*" (Eph. ii. 13). Such, too, according to the Father's eternal purpose and grace, were *chosen* in Christ before the foundation of the world. We are priests therefore by God's *election*.

Secondly, Aaron's sons were

priests by birth,

priests as sons of Aaron. When a son of Aaron was born, he was necessarily at a certain age a priest. No one else in Israel could be a priest. No interest, talents, wealth, or anything besides, could procure the office. These only were priests. Such only were recognised by God. They must be Aaron's sons. So now no one is a priest who is not born of God, and every one who is born of God is a priest, and every believer

is this through grace ; for he is born of the Spirit ; he is a child of God ; he is in everlasting relationship with Jesus the Great High Priest. Scripture therefore speaks of us as " born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever " (1 Pet. i. 2, 3). We are priests, then, by a new and spiritual birth.

Thirdly, Aaron's sons were

priests by consecration,

made priests unto God. They were *washed* ; " Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water " (Lev. viii. 6) ; so we are set apart by the sanctifying power of the Word. They were clothed with garments provided by God. So we stand in Christ, who is our righteousness. Sins being remitted, and the conscience purged by the blood of Jesus, we can " draw near to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." They were also consecrated or set apart by God for Himself by being sprinkled with the blood of the ram of consecration. " He brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toe of their right feet : and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about " (see Lev. viii. 6, 24).

Thus they were sanctified by the blood, set

apart for God and His blessed service. The right ear was marked with blood to teach us that we are to hearken to God's voice—not to lend our ears to receive the evil and foolish communications which men would make, but amid the clatter of ten thousand conflicting voices to hearken to what God says, "A wise man will hear" (Prov. i. 5). The blessed Lord said, "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious" (Isa. l. 4, 5).

There are two great avenues to the heart—the eye, and the ear. By attracting the eye, Satan often succeeds in turning away the heart, by taking us off the true object of faith and occupying us with something else to gratify the lusts of the eye. Some of the most serious falls in Scripture have been through the lust of the eye. The other principal avenue to the heart is the ear. If Satan can get us to hearken to the voice of the flatterer or to the roar of the lion, he will often turn us away from the posture of listening to the voice of Him whose we are, and whom by grace we serve. It is, then, our true posture of soul to be consciously set apart for God, and for Him only, as sanctified by the blood of Jesus, and waiting upon and for Him, hearkening to His voice, we always find to be the true path of blessing. "Whoso hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from

fear of evil." But we should never forget that "the flattering mouth worketh ruin," and "a whisperer separateth chief friends."

The thumb of the right hand being sprinkled with blood is no doubt to teach us that we are now to work for God, to minister according to His will—that we are set apart to be thus active in His blessed service; for we all have some service committed to us. "He gave to every man his work." "To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." We each have ministry of some kind to carry out in faithfulness to God. We are all His children and His servants. The hand is sprinkled with blood, sanctified, set apart for His service and none other. Whether, therefore, we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to God's glory. We are not to live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. Our bodies are to be consecrated to His service. We are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service; for we are not our own: we are bought with a price. We are therefore to glorify God in our body.

On these accounts, also, the great toe of the right foot was sprinkled with blood to show that our walk should be in obedience to Him, every step ordered by the Lord. The ear was first sprinkled, to show that we must receive all our commands and instructions from God, in order

then to minister for Him and walk with Him. We thus see that another characteristic of these priests, so typical of us, was that they were wholly set apart for God, by being sprinkled with the blood of the ram of consecration—a point of the utmost practical importance, and never to be lost sight of; and if there were no other reason, this is enough to show the utter folly and complete delusion of people being made priests by human appointment, not to refer to the exceeding sinfulness of despising God's order of a heavenly, spiritual, holy, and royal priesthood.

But this was not all. The last point to notice in this solemn business of consecration of the priests is, that they were anointed with oil—an unmistakable type of our being anointed with the Holy Ghost. As an inspired apostle writes: "Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath *anointed* us, is God"; while another apostle writes: "The *anointing* which ye have received of Him abideth in you" (see 2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 27). This is our power for service; this makes the character of priesthood now to be spiritual and holy, not merely human or educational, not to say successional. The latter is but a poor caricature of the former, and not only lifeless and powerless, but far worse than anything else; it sets aside the divine order by substituting another. Those, then, who are God's priests now, are consecrated by the blood of Jesus, and anointed by the Holy Ghost.

Assembly Meetings.

THE question is often asked, "What is an Assembly Meeting?" A simple answer is that every time Christians come together on Assembly or Church ground, *i.e.*, when they meet in obedience to the Word of God to practise all or any of the truths concerning the Assembly—whenever they are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ—that is an Assembly Meeting.

Let us take some examples from Scripture:—

1. For the Lord's Supper. See 1 Cor. xi. 17 to end. Note specially verses 18, 20, and 33. Verse 18 may be more general; but from verses 20 and 33 it is evident that the object of coming together was to eat the Lord's Supper. See also Acts xx. 7.
2. For Prayer. See Acts xii. 5, 12. Also 1 Tim. ii. 1, 8; Matt. xviii. 19, 20.
3. For Edification. See 1 Cor. xiv., specially verses 5, 12, 23, 26. Also Acts xi. 26.
4. For the Putting away from among themselves an evil-doer and the Purifying of the Assembly itself. See 1 Cor. v. and 2 Cor. vii. 11.
5. For dealing with individual wrongs between brethren. Matt. xviii. 15-20 and 1 Cor. vi. 1-8.
6. For Binding and Loosing—discipline and

restoration generally (including 4 and 5). Matt. xviii. 18-20.

7. For Examining into any matter requiring it. See Acts xv. ; Matt. xviii.

8. Acts iv. 28-31 (prayer) and Acts xx. 7 (teaching) are examples of what may be done in the Assembly when it is come together, though in neither case was prayer or teaching the special object which brought the saints together.

There are various things which characterise the Assembly on earth, and it sometimes happens that all these traits are not found at each coming together of believers. That does not prove that the meeting does not take place on "Assembly ground," nor are the saints deprived of the presence in their midst of the Lord Jesus. Only it is evident that they cannot practise on that occasion any truth which is beyond the scope of the meeting. So far as it goes such a meeting is an Assembly Meeting, but it is not competent to do everything that pertains to the Assembly.

May we say that three chief traits of the Assembly on earth, in its practical conduct, are those of the Body of Christ, the House of God, and the Candlestick? The Candlestick character and the House character have to do with public testimony. Discipline is in connection with the House. The Body character sets forth the relations of believers one to another.

Let us pass briefly in review the different kinds of meetings we are familiar with,

The meeting for Breaking Bread is the chief Assembly Meeting, both from the important object of it, and also from its place on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. Other things may also be rightly done there, so long as the true object of the meeting remains untouched. See Acts xx. 7.

The Prayer Meeting is certainly an Assembly Meeting, specially convoked for prayer, but where the action of the Spirit may guide also in singing, or in reading suitable portions of the Word, or in a short exhortation. We must not restrict or "quench" the Spirit. Then again the communication of news which call for prayer or praise is very useful and tends to definite prayer. Not to admit that the Prayer Meeting is an Assembly Meeting would make the saints come together on some other principle than that of being gathered to the Lord's name. What a loss it would be not to count on Christ's presence in their midst! And why seek any other principle when the one we have is divinely sufficient?

The Reading Meeting* is an Assembly Meet-

* It seems to us that the usual Weekly Reading Meeting can scarcely be called an Assembly Meeting, for the essential feature of the latter is the liberty of the Spirit's action, whereas in the ordinary Reading Meeting it is arranged beforehand what the character of the meeting is to be, and also, as a rule, what the Scripture to be read shall be. The occasional Reading Meetings held at times

ing for edification. It is not on the responsibility of any special brother, saints come there as gathered by the Holy Spirit to the Lord's name, to get (or communicate) what He has for those who wait on Him. It is true that we have not an example of such a meeting in the Word (so far as regards the exact form of it, unless it be 2 Tim. ii. 2, and that is rather special), but we are exhorted to search the Scriptures, to feed Christ's lambs and sheep. This meeting affords an excellent occasion of doing so, as there is opportunity of teaching and learning by question and answer.

But it is well to bear in mind that edification is the object of the meeting, so that any brethren qualified to teach should keep the younger in view, and that no question should be put which is not really for edification. No crotchets should be aired there, and it is very necessary to make full and intelligible statements of truths familiar perhaps to half the hearers, but not to every one. It is well to remember that the Lord forms and provides teachers, and our part is to receive what He supplies, and if He deign to use us wait on Him. It is not for the flock to arrange what teaching they will have.

The "Open" Meeting (as it is called) is an Assembly Meeting for edification according to 1 Cor. xiv. The principle of it is applied to the

of Conference might partake more of an Assembly character.—ED.

meeting on Lord's Day morning, but otherwise it seems rarely practised locally. Would it not be better to use the scriptural term for it?

When the "Open" Meeting comprises saints from various meetings, it still remains an Assembly Meeting for edification, as being on the ground of the One Body, and they can count on Christ's presence in their midst. What loss it would be not to do so! The house and candlestick aspects are absent or only partially in view, and the scope of the meeting remains limited, though very full surely.

When brothers come together for a Care Meeting can they count on Christ's presence in their midst? It is true that they are not the Assembly in the full sense of the term, and their action *must therefore be limited to what they may scripturally do.* According to Matthew xviii., the Church or Assembly hears witnesses and therefore sifts a matter thoroughly; that is assuredly not the part of sisters, who have nothing to do with the administration, rule, or government of the Assembly. When an Assembly has to clear itself from evil, it is evident that the whole Assembly (brothers and sisters) must act as a whole. In such a case there is properly speaking no decision to take; but when the facts are established, the saints act in obedience to the Word. The duty of examining the facts and seeing what is to be done concerns the brothers. See Acts xv.; 1 Tim. ii. 12; Heb. xiii. 17. We

consider then that a Care Meeting is an Assembly Meeting of brothers* limited in its scope, but where faith counts on the Lord's presence in the midst. How else indeed could any of us have courage to take part in such a meeting, and seek to care for the Lord's people?

An Assembly Meeting for Discipline or for purifying the Assembly by self-judgment and putting away an evil-doer from their company, has not properly the examination of the matter before it, but the facts having been ascertained and the matter being ripe for action, obedience to the truth should mark the action of the Assembly. Then again a like meeting is fitting for the reception of a brother after restoration of soul. Ofttimes a matter will be suitable for *Assembly prayer before it is ripe for action*; in that case the Assembly should be told, without debate, how the matter stands, so that prayer and supplication may be made in common about it, or intercession too, as the case may be. Thus the heart and conscience of all the saints may be exercised in a matter before the moment for action arrives. Indeed the Lord may graciously hear the prayers and come in without necessity for any further action.

Great and numerous are the individual bless-

* Does not the fact of limitation to brothers only preclude its being an Assembly Meeting? 1 Cor. xiv. 23 gives what seems to be an essential feature. "If, therefore, the **WHOLE CHURCH** be come together," &c.—ED.

ings of believers ; great and many too are their Assembly blessings. Something of the importance of the latter may be learnt from the way the risen Lord on the very day of His resurrection gathered His disciples together and came into their midst.

Two of them leave the others and start for Emmaus. The Lord joins Himself to their company, makes the journey with them while He unfolds the Scripture to them, and when the house is reached He enters with them at their entreaty ; but no sooner is He made known to them in the breaking of bread than He vanishes from their sight. Why is this? Is it not because His object was to gather them with the others? They return at once to Jerusalem, *to find the eleven gathered with others, and to learn that the risen Lord had appeared to Simon, and had thus given them the motive their hearts needed for coming together (Luke xxiv.)*

In a similar way in the Gospel of John (chap. xx.), His message to His brethren sent by Mary Magdalene—and doubtless also the visit of Peter and John to the empty sepulchre, when John “saw and believed”—had the effect of bringing the disciples together, just as what they were afterwards able to tell Thomas brought him there on the first day of the following week, and earlier too perhaps.

And when He was in their midst, how full of blessing was His presence and how precious His

dealings with them and His communications to them. He occupied their hearts with Himself, so that they were glad "when they saw the Lord." There too "He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." And there, in their midst, He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost . . ."

The disciples were together when the Holy Spirit came down on the day of Pentecost; and after the gospel haul of that day we read that "all that believed were together" (Acts ii.). Again, a few days later, when the apostles had been threatened by the Jewish rulers, "being let go, they went to their own company," and there, after prayer to God with one accord, the Holy Ghost mightily manifested His presence among them and in them (Acts iv.).

Continue the Acts and peruse the Epistles and the Book of Revelation—throughout we cannot but be struck by the place the Assembly has therein and the varied matters carried on when the saints are come together, or act together as an Assembly.

May we thus learn to value the Assembly and to prize highly the actual coming together in the Assembly, deeply imbued with the thought that God is there (Matt. i. 23, xviii. 20; Acts xiii. 1-3; 1 Cor. iii. 16, xiv. 25; 1 Thess. v. 19, 20).

F. M. H.

Hints on Ezekiel.

SECTION II.—Chap. viii.-xix.

WE have now come to a new section of the book, comprising a series of various revelations given to the prophet a year after those we have just been considering: "And it came to pass in the sixth year (that is, the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity), in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month," &c. (ver. 1). All is here most precise both as to time and to place.

From chapter viii. to the close of chapter xi. seems to be one connected vision. The sorrowful fact had been declared that Jehovah was about to forsake His sanctuary and give it into the hands of the wicked of the earth (chap. vii. 20-23); now we are shown in detail what was the fearful iniquity that drove Him to such extreme action.

Chap. viii.—GREATER ABOMINATIONS.

As the prophet sat in his house in the land of Chaldea, the elders of Judah presented themselves before him, drawn doubtless from the persuasion that the mind of the Lord was possessed by him in a special manner (see chap. xx. 1). This was the moment chosen by Jehovah to set forth the cause of all the threatened judgments.

The hand of the Lord God fell upon him, and in the visions of God, the glory of the God of Israel passes before him such as he had before seen it, and he is carried in the spirit, not in actual presence, to Jerusalem, the centre of all the nation's wickedness.

The sight that now unrolls itself before Ezekiel of all the enormities practised amidst the very precincts of the temple, shows ample ground for the departure from that house of the glory which had filled it in the day of its consecration under Solomon. At that blessed time the sound of joy and thanksgiving ascended in one united burst of praise, and "the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God" (2 Chron. v. 11-14). But now all was changed, the image of jealousy stood at the very gate of the altar. Of Manasseh, the wicked king of Judah, we are told that "he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the Lord said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all tribes of Israel, will I put My name for ever" (2 Kings xxi. 7). Indeed it was because of all the abominations that this wicked king had wrought in Jerusalem, that the Lord spake by His prophets, saying, "Because Manasseh king of Judah . . . hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did,

which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols; therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle" (2 Kings xxi. 11, 12).

This doubtless was the image of jealousy now seen by Ezekiel in vision, and now was about to be executed this solemn judgment of Jehovah. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," is a principle of universal application, and one which we do well to take heed to at all times. Many had been the warnings given, but all had been despised, and now at the commandment of the Lord the bands of the Chaldeans were come up upon Judah to remove them out of His sight, "for the sins of Manasseh . . . which the Lord would not pardon" (2 Kings xxiv. 1-5).

But greater abominations were yet to be seen. Now it was "the ancients of the house of Israel" with the son of Shaphan in their midst. In vain therefore to plead ignorance of the requirements of the law of Moses, for was it not his father who had read out of that book to King Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv.)? "And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations

that they do here. So I went in and saw ; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about . . . Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chamber of his imagery? For they say, The Lord seeth us not ; the Lord hath forsaken the earth" (vers. 7-13). What depths of idolatrous degradation are here described, all done in the dark, the "dim religious light" so abhorrent to Him who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all ! Let guilty Christendom take heed, "otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. xi.).

But there was an accumulation of guilt, all centering around the house of the Lord, the place that should have appealed the most loudly to the people's heart and conscience. There were women weeping for Tammuz, one of the most degrading of idolatrous rites ; there were men "with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces towards the east ; and they worshipped the sun toward the east." Instead of standing out in testimony against the false gods of the heathen around, the chosen people had themselves sunk into its most debasing forms. All conscience was gone, every prophetic warning was unheeded, utter insensibility to the heinousness of their sin was manifested. "Then He said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of

man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke Me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (vers. 13-18).

How literally all this sorrowful punishment was poured upon the guilty nation their after-history abundantly demonstrated.

Correspondence.

Philadelphia:—Do you think 2 Corinthians v. 3 refers to the present state of the saints who have gone to be with the Lord? Can "naked" be applied to such?

No. Departed saints are "unclothed" (verse 4), that is, the spirit and the body are separated. At the coming of the Lord they will be "clothed" with their resurrection bodies. The apostle *earnestly* desired this resurrection body. He had a *desire* to depart, and be with Christ; but he *earnestly* desired the resurrection state at the coming of the Lord. The "if" of verse 3 does not imply that there was a fear lest the

saint should be found naked when clothed with his resurrection body ; that would be the case with the wicked. Verse 3 is as though the apostle said : " It being clearly understood that being clothed we shall not be found naked."

The sinner out of Christ will be found naked ; not so the saint.

ED.

A question on ministry in the Assembly.

When God called out His people some sixty or seventy years ago from the sects, it was through reviving the truth of what the Church was as revealed in the Word—and along with that, the truth concerning the Holy Spirit, not only as indwelling the individual saint, but free to use whom He will in the gathered company, either in prayer, praise, or the ministry of the Word in edification (1 Cor. xiv.). We are told, " Ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted " (ver. 31). While there was perfect liberty for all to take part, yet not more than *two* or *three* were to *speak* at each time of gathering—the object of this being, no doubt, that all should be for *edification* (*cf.* vv. 26, 29). Ministry, therefore, was not intended as a gratification for the speaker, but for the edification of the hearers, &c. &c.

ED.

Outline of the Gospel according to John.

NICODEMUS.

CHAPS. ii. 23—iii.

THE four disciples gathered to Jesus as described in chapter i., set before us a pattern of those whom divine grace and purpose associate with Him in all His grace and glory. The chapters which we will now consider (iii.-vi.) show the process by which sovereign grace delivers such from their ruined natural condition.

The first introduced is Nicodemus, specimen of a man who, with every good intention and desire for divine things, has nevertheless completely lost his way in the world, and would fain have guidance, and indeed seeks it from the Lord. The scene was Jerusalem; the occasion, the feast of the passover. The signs Jesus had wrought forced upon many the conviction of His divine mission. But, far more than intellectual conclusions, Nicodemus had soul-needs, and sought, though by night, some spiritual instruction from a trustworthy and authoritative source.

A Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, the teacher of Israel, instinctively it was a fear of being seen that prompted him to come to the discredited prophet of Nazareth (ii. 18-20) by night. Such is the unmanly dread that shakes the feeble

heart where the holy fear of God does not hold sway. Such is the subtle power which the world wields over man terrorised by its prince.

But Jesus meets his inquiries in a way quite unexpected. Not human power or man's responsibility, as he had thought, can enter here. By these indeed man might lose himself; but if lost there was no longer hope or help, save in God alone. And if He act in grace for such, it cannot be to merely remedy or restore that which was ruined and spoiled, but to introduce a new source of life and a new realm—the kingdom of God—the heavenly things and eternal life. In fact it is man's needs that have to be met by grace; for human power to do good, there is none. And as for God's requirements, another must answer to them (for the sinner can only heap up transgression), and none can witness of the heavenly things nor have gone up thither, save He who came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven.

Thus the two great marks of the path of blessing are exclusively divine in conception and execution, namely, the new birth and the cross, the latter leading directly into the heavenly things, so that eternal life is his who believes on the lifted-up Son of man. Well might Nicodemus, thinking of power in the flesh, say, "How can a man be born when he is old?" But through God's grace he may be born anew, of water (by the Word) and of the Spirit, so that that

which is born is spirit, and by a power purely divine.

How blessed a revelation for this poor lost and wandering soul, and for ours also, of the sovereign and impartial love of God!—such love that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life!

Remark here the contrasted way in which the Scripture treats the question of life and light. We have already seen in chapter i. that the entrance of the divine light into the scene of man's moral darkness did not enlighten the darkness, but only exposed its incapacity to receive the light. Now, in chapter iii. 19, the coming into the world of light is to man the occasion of judgment. Life, on the contrary, even eternal life, is that which sovereign grace bestows on whosoever believes on the only-begotten Son; for God has not sent His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved through Him. In a word, Light touches the question of man's responsibility; Life, that of the grace of God.

The incident of the reasoning of John's disciples with a Jew about purification is introduced in order to show the transition from the earthly dispensation, in which the law and the prophets had their part, to the heavenly things, the testimony to which was rendered by a Divine Person. In connection with the earthly things,

John was the greatest. He was sent from God, and was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb; but the special grandeur and dignity of his mission arose from the fact that he bore witness to the Light, and was sent before the Christ to announce and introduce Him to Israel. He was but as the friend of the bridegroom, and has only to withdraw, for his joy is fulfilled when the bridegroom appears.

John's testimony is the great dividing line between the heavenly and the earthly; that of Christ being not merely heavenly, but purely divine (iii. 32-34), and no one receives it.

But observe again the difference of light and life. Where eternal life is the point, it is seen to be the gift of sovereign grace. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. He that believes on the Son has life eternal" (vers. 34, 35). To have life one must receive it from Christ; but "the light" never attracts the natural man, but is judgment to him; for coming into the world, as it did in the person of the Word, man preferred darkness (vers. 19, 20). Men only come to the light when God has already wrought livingly in grace (ver. 21). Life is one thing and the conditions of life quite another, though intimately connected. Life is of necessity first, and coming to the light is an equally necessary consequence. Life was in the Word; Light was the condition of its existence for men. We live divinely, through

grace, by faith, but we do not become life. Light is the condition in which we live and walk, and we become it in the Lord (Eph. v. 8). Life and condition are thus in contrast though divinely associated.

A path wholly of God, foreign to human power entirely; and one not merely in or through the world, but which goes entirely out of it, is that which the Lord Jesus sets before this notable man. Pattern of Israel whom he professed to teach, he was in religious and responsible relations with God, and started thus on the road to possession of the promises; but he had wandered and became lost in the darkness. Nicodemus receives indeed the instruction he desires, but it casts him wholly upon God's power and grace, and the work and worth of the Son of man who is Son of God.

Hints on Ezekiel.

Chap. ix.—THE MAN WITH THE INKHORN.

BUT there was a remnant spared in Ezekiel's day, even as there will be in the coming day of Israel's tribulation; for though all this has had an accomplishment in the Chaldean destruction of the city and its people, it nevertheless is typical of sorrows yet to be realised

by the Jewish nation, on account of the far greater sin of the rejection of Messiah. Since the return from Babylon, they have always kept themselves from the sin of idolatry. The unclean spirit of idolatry then left the nation, and never since has it found a resting-place there. Empty, swept, and garnished has been its condition of dead formalism ever since; but in the end, under Antichrist, a sevenfold worse idolatry will take possession of them. That this is the application of our Lord's parable in Matthew xii. 43-46, is evident from the words which follow: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the altar" (vers. 1, 2). Judgment is now about to be executed, but a remnant is to be spared.

Whether the man clothed with linen was a seventh, and stands symbolically for the Lord Himself, we cannot say; but the service of this one is chiefly intercessory, whereas the others were the executors of judgment. The high priest on the day of atonement was clothed in

holy linen garments. In that portion of the book of Revelation, before the public manifestation of the Lord in glory (Rev. xix. 11), we constantly read of "another" angel, which seems in like manner to be symbolical of the Lord Himself (see Rev. vii. 2, viii. 3-5). In these passages the action of the angel is similar to that of the man clothed in linen.

"And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." Helpless they were to alter the general state, but sorrow filled their hearts at the sight of all that was so dishonouring to the Lord, practised even in His very sanctuary. Their lot was cast in days of evil, but they walked through the midst of the ruin with hearts in communion with God. How pleasing was this in the sight of Him that searcheth the heart and trieth the reins! In the midst of the ruins of the Church, in like manner, we read of "a few names" who "have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev. iii. 4).

Jehovah's mark having been set upon the foreheads of the sorrowing remnant, the solemn word of judgment now goes forth (vers. 5-7). None were to be spared except those upon whom the mark had been put. All alike were guilty: "Let not your eye spare, neither have ye

pity : slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women ; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark." But some were more responsible in their guilt, and so it is said, "Begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house."

Would any think that this judgment was too severe? Jehovah had long had patience, and indeed "the iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness." The very fact that God did not interfere in judgment on account of their sins only increased their iniquity, for the sinful people abandoned themselves the more to their wickedness, saying, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not" (ver. 9). Further clemency would have been but complicity in the evil.

Chap. x.—THE VISION OF THE CHERUBIM.

The judgment which began at the sanctuary is now to extend to the city. Jehovah Himself who sits on the throne of judgment superintends its execution ; this is a most solemn feature of the case. The great abominations of the house of Israel were causing Him to go far away from His sanctuary, and the glory that at one time had suddenly filled His house on the bright day of its consecration is now about to take its departure, slowly it is true, but surely ; and yet

not for ever, for at the close of the book it is seen to return for its millennial display (chap. xliii. 1-5).

The same vision of the living creatures that the prophet had seen by the river Chebar (chap. i.) is here in the main repeated. This chapter leaves no room to doubt that the living creatures were the cherubim (vers. 15, 20), and these all through Scripture signify the executors of God's government on the earth. We need not further enlarge on what has already been before us, but it is solemn to see here the glory of Jehovah connected with the judgment of His people, as in Solomon's day it had been linked up with their blessing. The change had come in the people, for He was as ready to bless as ever: slowly and reluctantly He takes His departure. The glory that once had filled the house "so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud" (2 Chron. v. 14), now removed and stood over the threshold (ver. 4). With solemn and measured step the man clothed with linen approaches the cherubim and takes some of the coals of fire which should have consumed the incense for the people's acceptance; he took it, and went out to scatter it in judgment over the city. In Revelation viii. 3-5 we see a similar twofold effect of the fire, first to give efficacy to the prayers of the saints, and secondly to fill the earth, an apostate earth, with judgment. Next the glory leaves the threshold

of the house, and is borne away by the cherubim lingering once again by the east gate: "Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight," &c. (vers. 18-20).

Chap. xi.—TWENTY-FIVE EVIL COUNSELLORS.

The prophet is now taken in vision to the east gate of the Lord's house at Jerusalem, there where the cherubim with the departing glory had lingered. It was there amidst the princes of the people that the wicked counsels of unbelief took their origin which were about to culminate in the destruction of king, people, and city.

In direct opposition to the solemn and urgent appeals of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. xxix. 5, &c.), these scornful leaders say: "It is not near the time to build houses," * &c. (ver. 3). They were working in mischievous antagonism to the mind and expressed will of God. But their folly would end in disaster. They might threaten Jeremiah with death, they might cast him into the dungeon, but all would be in vain. Their evil conduct is denounced with striking emphasis by the prophet Ezekiel, "The Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak," &c. (vers. 5-13).

These unbelieving rulers of the people had

* This passage is somewhat obscure, but several translate it as above, and this would seem to be the meaning.

said : " This city (*i.e.* Jerusalem) is the caldron, and we be the flesh " ; this was given as a reason on their part why they should not submit to the king of Babylon, but resist him to the uttermost. But no, the multitudes already slain in the streets of the city, they were the flesh ; but on those that were left of them should the judgment fall, for they had not repented of all their evil ways : " I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. Ye shall fall by the sword : I will judge you in the border of Israel ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof ; but I will judge you in the border of Israel : and ye shall know that I am the Lord : for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that are round about you " (vers. 9-13).

A startling incident accompanied this solemn prophetic denunciation, which brought to light Ezekiel's love for the erring remnant of his people at the very moment of his uttering such unsparing judgments from the Lord : " And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died," &c. (ver. 13).

But what a contrast is now drawn between the self-righteous inhabitants of Jerusalem who would not bow under God's chastening hand, and those who, owning the discipline of Jehovah, had gone

forth in obedience to His word, and accepted as from Him the place of humiliation and weakness that their own sin had brought upon them! The former in their pride of heart claimed the place of honour and despised their brethren: "Get you far from the Lord," they said; "unto us is this land given in possession" (ver. 15). This was mere boasting, and the sorrowful evidence that there was no conscience at work. What was the land, if God were not there? What was the temple, if the glory were departed? And so it was; but they knew it not. Is there nothing like this in Christendom to-day?

But what consolation for the despised children of the captivity! "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" (ver. 16). This is beautiful! Jerusalem might be given into the hands of her enemies, the temple might be in ruins, the Shechinah glory might be departed, and all because of the sin and failure of the guilty people; and yet would Jehovah vouchsafe His presence in blessing to the scattered and repentant exiles. They owned the ruin; would He leave them without remedy?

Not only this, but to them were given precious promises of future glory, to be realised in measure at the return from Babylon after the seventy

years of captivity spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet (chap. xxv.), in all its fulness, at a yet future day when the Lord Himself shall be there, and the earth shall shine with His glory. "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (vers. 17-21).

But if this were the vision of future blessing, for the present the glory must depart: "Then did the cherubim lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city" (vers. 22, 23). This is the sorrowful end in that dispensation of man's responsibility: the glory takes its slow but final leave of the guilty city, and is no more seen in connection with Israel until its return in millennial display (chap. xliii.).

Here closes this vision, and Ezekiel finds him-

self in bodily presence in his own house which he had never left, and where we have seen him at the beginning of the vision (chap. viii. 1). For the encouragement of his fellow captives he communicates to them "all things that the Lord had shewed" him. How cheering for faith, feeling the weakness and low condition of things, to have the heart and mind carried forward to what God will carry out in unfailing faithfulness for His own glory and His people's blessing.

Lectures on the Priesthood.

(Continued.)

FOURTHLY, Aaron's sons were in such relationship with Aaron, the high priest, as no others were, and were also associated with him in the service of the sanctuary. So, now, every believer, whether man, woman, or child, is by the new birth, and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, brought into real relationship with Jesus, our Great High Priest. Being sanctified by God, and made children, "He is not ashamed to call us *brethren*." We are also united to Him by the Holy Ghost, so that "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Thus are we in spiritual and eternal relationship with Jesus, now in the heavens, our life and righteousness.

Moreover, having liberty to enter into the holiest of all, where Jesus acts as Minister of the Sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, we offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Him. As none but Aaron and his sons had access to the sanctuary for the service of priesthood; so now all who are priests, and none else, have liberty to enter into the holiest where Jesus is.

Thus we see that, like Aaron's sons, believers *now* are priests unto God, by election, by birth, by consecration, by being in relationship with the High Priest, and associated with Him in the service of the sanctuary; the distinction between high priest and priest being always preserved. Jesus, though "King of kings," as well as High Priest, has not yet come forth to reign; and we too, though both kings and priests, await His time of manifested glory ere we reign with Him. Now we exercise our priestly office, and ere long through matchless grace shall sit on thrones and wear crowns. Now we are both "an holy priesthood" and a "royal priesthood"; now we suffer with Him, then we shall reign with Him.

Again, because they were God's priests, he provided everything for their sustenance. He prescribed what they were to eat, and what they were to abstain from, so as to be fitted for their office. To feed on what was forbidden, or to have abstained from what God ordered, would

alike have rendered them incompetent for the true work of priesthood. Here also the typical instruction set forth touching the sons of Aaron is deeply instructive. The food prescribed, too, was for priests *only*—"a stranger shall not eat thereof." The priests were to eat and be satisfied, and the remainder might not be eaten by a stranger, but it was for God; it was burnt and offered up by fire. "If ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire: *it shall not be eaten*, because it is holy" (see Exod. xxix. 33, 34).

The priests were to feed on the sacrifices in order to be fitted for their service. Observe the divine directions: "They shall eat of those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them." This is both simple and positive. We know who has made atonement, and by what sacrifice alone it has been accomplished; and it is upon that blessed, spotless, perfect One, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that we have to feed for real strength and blessing.

Remark here that the priests were *to eat*—not merely to look upon and talk about, but to handle and receive, so as to derive nourishment and strength, refreshment and comfort, from the same sacrifice by which atonement had been made; thus teaching us that it is personal communion with the Lord which can alone

qualify for the activities of priestly service. The believer, already washed from his sins, having a purged conscience, accepted in Christ, is therefore to find his daily strength for priestly service in drawing blessing from Him who was the one Sacrifice which was once offered. We are to feed upon Him—to taste, enjoy, and enter into the qualities, worth, perfections, and glory of Him who redeemed us by His death upon the cross, so as to be strengthened for the faithful discharge of our priestly office.

“But how are we to feed upon Him?” some may ask. We reply, “The written Word reveals Him, and the Holy Ghost given unto us testifies of Him.” Thus, pondering the Holy Scriptures in dependence on the Holy Ghost, and receiving God’s thoughts in faith, we enter into the divine testimony of Jesus, Son of God—His personal glories; His finished work; what He was and is to God; what He is to us and for us; thus our hearts are gladdened and our inner man strengthened. In this way we shall be so attracted to Him, so taken up with His perfections, that in a measure we shall be able to say: “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” And being occupied with Him, He will be to us the attractive, absorbing, commanding, and satisfying object of our hearts. We thus obtain strength for service. It is communion, entering into the love and power of Christ, and finding

satisfaction and delight in that same object which perfectly satisfies and delights the heart of the Father. "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ"; for by the communion of the Holy Ghost, we have thoughts, feelings, joy, and rest produced in our souls in joint-participation—wondrous grace!—with those of the Father and His Son.

Does the Father delight and rest in that beloved Son who glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do? So do we. Is He an object capable of filling and satisfying the Father's heart? Assuredly He is. He is then much more than enough for our hearts. And does that beloved Son, now in the glory, delight in all the results of His accomplished work? And do not we? Does He not take deepest interest in His present work on earth, both in evangelising and care for His own flock? And do not we? Is He not looking forward with earnest expectation of having us to be with Him to behold His glory? And are not we looking and waiting for Him? And if we ponder it for a moment, we must see that the blessed Spirit, the other Comforter, who has been given by the Father to dwell in us, could not produce in us a lower order of thought, feeling, joy, and hope, than suit the Father and the Son, though our apprehensions may be small and poor. Oh the blessedness of this precious fellowship! How it kindles our hearts to go out

in adoring worship and thanksgiving—attracts, and sets our minds on things above where Christ sitteth, and draws us onward in testimony for Him who so richly loved us, and so willingly gave Himself for us! What a mine of wealth, what untold treasure, is wrapped up in those precious words, “They shall eat of those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them”! (Exod. xxix. 33). It has always been God’s way to feed His people. In the sandy desert He rained down bread from heaven day by day, and they had only to gather up and eat of His gracious and abundant provision. When they arrived in the land flowing with milk and honey, the manna ceased, and they ate of “the old corn of the land.” But when Jesus came and announced Himself to be “the bread of God,” “the bread of life,” He said, “The bread that I will give is *My flesh*, which I will give for the life of the world.” He is now, then, the bread of God, “and the living bread”; concerning which He added, “Whoso eateth *My flesh*, and drinketh *My blood*, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever” (John vi. 56-58).

Enough has been quoted from Scripture to

show the imperative importance of the believer being occupied with Christ, as drawing his resources from Him, so as to be strengthened and fitted for service—not only to do the will of God, but to do it in the spirit and mind of Christ. By feeding on the same sacrifice “wherewith atonement was made,” as we have seen, we are in communion with Him, we dwell in Him, and He dwells in us. His thoughts engage our minds, His grace pervades our souls, we enter into His unspeakable love, and He has a place in our hearts ; thus His presence is enjoyed, and we find our true place with Him in the true sanctuary inside the veil. Without this personal intercourse and communion with the Lord, we cannot possibly carry on the high and *holy functions of the priesthood* ; and though through marvellous grace we are objects of His untold love, washed from our sins in His blood, and have been made a royal and holy priesthood, we shall have little or no sense of it, and lose one of the highest occupations of soul, and one of the most exalted privileges that could possibly be known to us on the earth, during the absence of our precious Lord Jesus.

Blessed be God, the Scriptures testify of Christ, and the Holy Ghost guides into all truth, and takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us ; so that we are well furnished for the life and walk of faith through a barren and thirsty land where no water is—where, with all

the bodily comforts we enjoy, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, for our souls; but in Christ we have enough to satisfy our every need—a sufficiency for every requirement. Oh the blessedness of thus finding more than we could possibly have desired or needed in Christ, instead of complaining of the dry and disappointing character of broken cisterns, and the barrenness of the desert path! Thus we can look above, and step out with quickened step and freshly-girt loins, singing:

“Jesus, the Bread of life, is given
 To be our daily food;
 The Rock that gave the streams from heaven
 The Spirit of our God.

“Lord, ’tis enough; we ask no more:
 Thy grace around us pours
 Its rich and unexhausted store,
 And *all its joy is ours.*”

The Son of God.

THE gospel of God (Rom. i. 1) not only flows from God as its source—it can have no other source—but it must be according to the very nature of Him from whom it flows, expressing His infinite dignity, majesty, and holiness, but at the same time answering fully to the heart of Him who is love. And

while its source is thus the very highest, its objects are the very lowest, even sinners hopelessly defiled and lost (Rom. i. 18-32, iii. 9-19), and its aim to raise such to the highest point of blessing; and this according to the claims of a perfect righteousness, without which a love that would save sinners, would not be the love of a God of holiness, nor could its results be abiding. Had this gospel sprung from a lower source, or its objects been in the least degree above the lowest, or the contemplated blessing less than the most exalted, the gospel would not have been according to a God who is *infinite, eternal, and unchangeable*.

Who, save God Himself, could either devise or carry out such a gospel? None; or it would fall short of the gospel of God. Man has conceived plans of salvation, and has even modified God's plan, corrupting it to suit his own thoughts, but even his highest thoughts are not only folly, but finite. And poor man himself, when tested by God in many ways, has uniformly failed completely. But God in mercy to man has revealed a gospel worthy of Himself, and sent into the world His only-begotten Son, who answered to His whole nature and heart in all their infiniteness. He came from the highest, having been written of in the volume of the book of God's eternal counsels, was announced as soon as sin entered into the world, foretold in the Law, Psalms, and Prophets, and manifested

in the fulness of time, coming to do God's will (Heb. x. 7).

The Eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, who was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us (John i. 1-14) in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. viii. 3). He thus stooped from the highest glory in heaven to the very lowest place on earth, that He might seek and save the lost, and not only deliver them from hell, but give present peace with God, the relationship of children, communion with the Father, and might bring them to that glory from which He Himself came, and for which His atoning death would fit them. And all this for the glory of God in His whole nature, and for the satisfaction of His heart of love. For this end He became man, taking up the whole circumstances of man, from the beginning of his life, even becoming a babe, and in the humblest condition, laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn (Luke ii. 7). He then pursued his life amid the temptations of the devil, and the scorn and persecution of the world—wary, though He might have gone back to the glory from whence He came; hungry, though the cattle on a thousand hills were His.

But even this was not the lowest depth to which He had to stoop, for it was not miserable man, but *sinful* man He came to save—man subject to death, the wages of sin; and so He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the

cross (Phil. ii. 6-8), where He was made sin who knew no sin (2 Cor. v. 21), and where He was forsaken of His God (Ps. xxii. 1; Matt. xxvii. 46, &c.). There He was numbered with transgressors, and amid the jeers and taunts of priests and people He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. Still there was a lower step He had to take, entering the grave, thus going under the earth His own hands had made, and so descending from the highest place, which, as the Eternal Son of God He filled, to the very lowest He could reach. He thus accomplished an atonement infinite in its character, suited to God, and by which the very chief of sinners might be saved, and a message of free salvation go out to the whole world, telling all—even the most degraded men sunk in sin—that God in the person of His Son had gone down lower than the death their sins deserved, and that none are too low to be the subjects of this infinite, eternal, redeeming grace.

But there is yet more. From the lowest depths on earth He has returned as Son of man to the highest place in heaven, where He has prepared a place for those who receive Him, and that in the Father's house (John xiv. 2, 3). His will is to have them with Him where He is (John xvii. 24). While they are on earth, they are children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 16, 17), and have the Holy Ghost given as

the earnest of their inheritance (Eph. i. 13, 14). They have the assured hope of eternal glory with Christ, and shall not only sit with Him on His throne (Rev. iii. 21), but shall enjoy as sons in the Father's house to all eternity, the most intimate communion with God's own Son who presents them there undefiled and undefilable. They share with Him the glory He earned as Son of man, and they behold the glory He had with the Father before the world was. God and the Lamb are there the one undivided object filling and satisfying every heart.



The Cross and the Glory.

I CAN'T have an interest in the cross without having an interest in the glory, for the cross carries me there.

We shall be making discoveries throughout eternity of His love and grace, but He has no discoveries to make of us.

The answer of God to the desire of self-exaltation, with which Satan inoculated the poor heart of man, is to have in the glory millions and myriads of those who will be the background to display Christ.

The order of being that we have been re-cast

in, is to take delight, not in our own blessing, but in Him. It is He—His place.

“God all in all” (1 Cor. xv.). Government supposes opposition, but when the Son has done His work, everything, from the greatest being to the most tiny, will be in harmony. When all is done, He takes His blessed place as “First-born among many brethren.”

He is not going to do *wonders* in creation, and *little things* in love.

We shall never forget the cross, even in the glory. If the purpose of God and the cross have gone together to put us in glory, they will go together in glory.

11th January 1884.



Correspondence.

“Is there any difference between the feet-washing of John xiii. and the advocacy of 1 John ii. ? Any difference between defilement and sin ?”

Your interesting question is one not so much for argument and dogmatism as for inquiry and edification.

To begin with, we should not allow anything to weaken in our souls the gravity of sin. Defilement and sin are in their nature identical, for sin is that which morally defiles in the sight of God.

“Is feet-washing in John xiii. exactly the same as advocacy in 1 John ii.?”

I have always understood that they coalesce; and yet feet-washing is the action *manward*, advocacy the action *Godward*.

“We have an Advocate with the Father”; here our blessed Lord has to do with God our Father in intercession for the sinning child. Whereas, “If I wash thee not,” &c.—here our girded Lord and Master takes our defiled feet into His hands to wash away the defilement.

Hence advocacy seems more what He does “with the Father”—feet-washing what He does to us.

But may there not be something more than this in that marvellous scene in John xiii.? In the Authorised Version we read, “supper being ended” (ver. 2), but in reality it should be “during supper.” In other words, it is not so much the figure of communion interrupted by sin, but of communion still continuing. Yet the Lord was leaving His own in the world to take His place on high in a heavenly scene. He would have the communion to be of a higher character. He was fitting His disciples for communion with Him in that new place He was about to enter.

Then again, do we not see in this something that corresponds to the priests of old? At their consecration they were first washed with water (Exod. xxix. 4). After that, each time they entered the tabernacle to perform their priestly

service they washed their hands and feet at the brazen laver (Exod. xxx. 17-22). Now in John xiii. we must carefully note that it is not a question of the *blood* of Christ as the ground of justification, but the *water* as a figure of the Word in its regenerating and renewing power.

“He that is washed (or bathed),” &c.—this corresponds to the washing of the priests at consecration, and was *never* repeated in their case; neither is it in ours, for once new born in a spiritual sense we cannot be born over again.

When the priests entered the tabernacle to do their service, they needed to wash their hands and feet, and so do we need constant feet-washing. Without doubt we need it if defilement has been contracted; but do we not also need it in each act of service, whether in worship, or in ministry amongst the saints, or in testimony to the world in the gospel?

We need the constant application of the Word to heart and conscience.

“Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth” (John xvii. 17).

WHEN a person gets discouraged about things around, it shows his mind has got wrong. We have just as much strength for our circumstances as Paul had for his. So we are without excuse.

Hints on Ezekiel.

Chap. xii.—STUFF FOR REMOVING.

THE prophet is now called to address himself to the captives amongst whom he dwelt, for even with them was found that pride of heart that refused to believe the solemn warning of judgment. It seemed to them impossible that God should allow Jerusalem to be entirely destroyed, and its people to be dispersed. What was this but deadness of conscience as to the sin that had made this judgment necessary? But even so, might they not all speedily return and be once more established? What was this but unbelief in the word of the Lord through Jeremiah? Had he not already announced that for seventy years their captivity should last?

They were a rebellious house; they would not see, and they would not hear. And is not Christendom in our day as blind to its own rapidly approaching apostasy, and as deaf to all God's plainest warnings of judgment? (see 2 Thess. ii.). "Thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. xi. 22).

With wondering eyes the captives look on as Ezekiel gathers his stuff together by day and removes it in the twilight with covered face, so that he might not see the ground (verses 4-8).

What could this strange conduct mean? The explanation then follows. "This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them." How literally all was fulfilled that is here symbolically portrayed the after-history of Zedekiah, king of Judah, amply declares (see 2 Kings xxv.; Jer. xxxix. 1-8). Zedekiah fled by night from Jerusalem but was followed by the Chaldean army, and brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, who there put out his eyes and brought him to Babylon—"yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there" (verses 8-17). How sad and humbling to think that God's own people had sunk so low that only by the execution of such judgments would they recognise His hand—"they shall know that I am the Lord."

Ezekiel is then made to eat his bread with quaking, and drink his water with trembling, thus indicating that alarm that should fill the hearts of the few people left in Jerusalem after the dreaded Chaldean siege. "Say unto the people of the land, Thus saith the Lord God of (*i.e., concerning*) the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel; They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment, because the land shall be desolate . . . and ye shall know that I am the Lord" (verses 17-21). Solemn indeed is it to observe once more that the people of Jehovah are obliged to own that He is Jehovah, not through the abundance of His

blessings which He was ever able and willing to bestow, but through His scattering and desolating judgments, the fruit of their own waywardness and folly. May we not all learn a much-needed lesson from this? How wise and gracious of our God to leave on record such histories of human failure and divine government! In God's government we reap what we sow, and yet His grace in the end brings sweetness out of every bitter cup.

But God's long-suffering patience with His erring people instead of bowing their hearts with contrition only filled them with greater unbelief: "Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord God; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect (*i.e.*, *accomplishment*) of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision, nor flattering divination within the house of Israel. For I am the Lord: I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass; it shall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word, and will perform it, saith the Lord God" (verses 21-27).

Long years before, the Preacher had lamented that, "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the

sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccles. viii. 11). So it was with Israel in Ezekiel's day, and so it is with Christendom to-day. The scoffers abound, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. iii. 4), but it is that they may walk after their own lusts. It is the evil servant that says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming" (Matt. xxiv. 48-51), and having once put far from him the evil day, abandons himself to every form of worldliness and fleshly licence.

But the days were come for Israel when the word that Jehovah had spoken should be accomplished (verses 26-28). A. H. B. "

The Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

LECTURE IV.

LEV. x. 8-15.

BESIDES abstaining from unclean things, which every Israelite was bound to do, the priests were on no account to drink wine or strong drink. The direction was simple enough, but doubtless reads to us very serious lessons. The effect of wine or strong drink is to inflame or stimulate the natural passions, which

cannot be done without soul damage. Hence the Holy Ghost, by Peter, enjoins us to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." If we are doing anything for the strengthening of the passions of an evil nature, the result must be disastrous to our spiritual health, and therefore unfitting for the due exercise of our priestly office.

There are three reasons given why we should avoid thus gratifying the fleshly appetite. First, they were told not to drink wine nor strong drink, when they went into the tabernacle of the congregation, "*lest ye die.*" And what believer of any experience does not know the lethargy and dead state of soul which fleshly indulgence induces? "To be carnally minded is death," is surely a divine axiom, and ought to be well pondered by us. Were this principle more heeded by saints, it may be that many would be able to ascertain why they have so often to complain of indolence and deadness as regards the things of the Lord. If we would live godly, ungodliness and worldly lusts must be denied. We are quickly influenced either by good or evil, and the spirit within us, the power for godliness, is easily grieved, and "he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."

Secondly, "That ye may *put difference* between holy and unholy, and between clean and unclean" (ver. 10). From this we gather that another effect of fleshly ways is to obscure spiritual vision and hinder spiritual discernment.

One of the first symptoms of souls having departed from the Lord is that they justify what they have formerly condemned. After Samson's folly and trifling with Delilah, the first thing the Philistines did was to put his eyes out. Such blindness, too, the enemy will effect on souls who give way to fleshly indulgence; at least they will be unable to put a difference between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean, qualities which are absolutely necessary for the priestly office (see Lev. xiii. 2, &c.). If we, then, would have discernment according to God, we must abstain from fleshly lusts. Why have some saints such difficulty in perceiving what to others is clearly unholy and unclean in God's sight? The answer is plain. There will be no ability to put difference between holy and unholy when the walk is careless and fleshly habits or ways encouraged. We are told that the Hebrew Christians were unable to enter into a true discernment of the Lord's things; for they were dull of hearing. Not having been practically engaged in the due exercise of priestly functions, and turning back to legal and worldly religiousness, their discernment had been little cultivated, and the disastrous effect was most manifest to the apostle. He writes: "Of whom" (speaking of the Lord Jesus) "we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again

which be the first principles of the oracles of God ; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness ; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil ” (Heb. v. 11-14). I have quoted the passage at length, because of its solemn importance, and also because it almost seems like a divine commentary on the subjects now immediately before us.

Thirdly, “ That ye may *teach* the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses ” (ver. 11). This point has been already anticipated by the quotation from Hebrews, where we are told that they ought to be able to teach others, instead of needing elementary teaching themselves. But this must be so, if souls are damaged by fleshly indulgence, instead of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living a life of faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. If we would, then, be lively, earnest Christians, and fit for our priestly functions, be able to discern between holy and unholy, and qualified to teach others, we must abstain from fleshly lusts, and feed upon those things wherewith the atonement was made to consecrate and sanctify us.

Avoiding wine and strong drink for the reasons given, the priests were to eat the meat-offering

in the holy place, and the peace-offering *in a clean place*. How significant all this is! The meat-offering shows the perfect humanity of Jesus in life, the spotless One, in whom was nothing rough and inconsistent, but who was perfectly pure and even in all His ways, as the fine flour sets forth. That Holy One was conceived by the Holy Ghost—"fine flour mingled with oil"—and He was anointed with the Holy Ghost, as the oil poured upon the fine flour would teach us. As, however, God only could enter into the fulness and perfections of this One, a "handful of the flour and of the oil" was offered to God, burnt upon the altar by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord. The remainder was food for the priests. And here we are told they were to eat the meat-offering *in a clean place*. No leaven was to be with it. Nothing unclean was to be associated with it. Elsewhere we read that they were to eat it with *unleavened bread*, and *in the holy place*. As free from leaven or uncleanness, and occupied with what is unleavened and holy, in a clean place—that is, apart from every impure association, and in the holy place, or where God's presence is—the priests were to eat the meat-offering. How profoundly precious yet solemn this is! How searching, too, inasmuch as it shows us that no careless walk, no unjudged evil, no association with uncleanness of any kind, can be allowed in those who are exercising the holy office of priests according to God!

But if self-judged and separate from all iniquity, as purged worshippers, consecrated priests, consciously in God's presence, there occupied adoringly with the infinite perfections of Him who was represented by the fine flour anointed with oil, delighting our souls in Him, and gathering strength and grace from Him, what a deep reality and precious privilege we then know the priestly office to be! This, be it observed, is emphatically communion; for God had His part as well as the priests. So we feed on the same spotless One, in whom the Father was well pleased, and to whom we must be everlastingly thankful.

But more than this. They were not only to be occupied (typically) with the perfect Man Christ Jesus in His life, but also as the One who had offered Himself without spot to God. This must also be eaten *in the holy place*, for the consciousness of being in God's presence, apart from everything unsuited to Him, is necessary for true enjoyment and appreciation of the food which His abundant grace has provided for us. It is important, too, to notice the parts of the peace-offering which were set apart for their food. They were "the wave-breast and the heave-shoulder" (ver. 14). Parts of the same victim which had been offered to God, and in which He had found a sweet savour. It is like the father who had provided the fatted calf, calling his returned prodigal to feast and rejoice with

himself, saying, "Let *us* eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found; and they began to be merry." What a peace-offering! What holy joy! What matchless love! And, blessed be God, we may add, too, what precious fellowship!

Now what are we to learn from this rich and abundant gift of "the wave-breast and heave-shoulder" for the priests' food, but that all the unsearchable, perfect love, as well as the almighty power of Christ, are laid open to us for our soul's everlasting consolation and strength? The breast the seat of the affections, and the shoulder the source of power, are thus specially before us. And in feeding, the need of our souls is precisely met by spreading out before us both the affections and strength of Him who has made peace for us by the blood of His cross. And these parts, too, they could wave before the Lord as infinitely acceptable to Him, as well as most precious to us.

And what, beloved, I would ask, do we know of these exercises of soul in God's most holy presence? Do we enter into the unspeakable privilege of being in the holy place—inside the veil? And when in the holiest of all, is it the ever-living Jesus there for us that attracts and delights our souls? Do we triumph in His exceeding preciousness, as well as His perfect love, and His almighty power usward? And do we

rejoice thus in Him? Can we say, "In whom, though now we see Him not, yet, believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"? Oh, beware of all uncleanness! We are careful not to have a spot of defilement on our bodies; why, then, should we not be equally zealous as to a spot of unjudged and uncleansed evil on our souls?

Without sustaining food, this blessed, happy fellowship, we must become weak and faint; but feeding on the finest of the wheat, on pure honey out of the rock, the life, and strength, and perfectness of Jesus the Lord, who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, we shall be qualified for our daily continual work of priesthood. Thus by the Word of God and Spirit we shall be tracing, entering into, and enjoying His unsearchable love and infinite power—*love* that met us in our sins and knows no change; *power* that has triumphed over all enemies, even death itself, and taken the place of Headship over all principality and power. What joy, and peace, and vigour to our hearts the reception of these glorious realities impart! What encouragement, too, all this divine instruction gives, to keep close to the Lord Jesus! How all this grace attracts and binds our hearts to Him! How necessary, too; for how else could we be fitted for faithfully exercising our functions as priests unto God?

(*To be continued.*)

Apostasy.

THE Mission recently held in Bradford has brought to light the appalling apostasy of the days we are living in.

We have heard before of the utter unbelief that is preached in a large number of the pulpits of that city—these men do not like to have their teaching called by the name that truly describes it, but infidelity it is, pure and simple.

Seven of the Congregational ministers of Bradford have written to the *Yorkshire Observer* explaining that they stood aloof from the Mission because they believed Dr Torrey's main teaching to be untrue. He has replied that "if they believe his main teachings are untrue, they do well to hold aloof from the Mission, but that those in their churches who believe in the reliability of the Bible, in the Deity of Christ, in the Atonement of Christ, in salvation through the acceptance of Christ and in that way only, in the efficacy of prayer, and in the personality and power of the Holy Spirit, which are his main themes, would do well to withdraw from their congregations."

We thank God for the faithfulness of His servant Dr Torrey, and feel that he needs to be borne up in prayer by all who have the interests of souls at heart. He is in the very zone of fire,

and is being attacked by the whole artillery of Satan.

But his advice raises a serious question. Where are these troubled souls to go? Every sect in christendom to-day is full of the "higher criticism" and the unbelief which this engenders; witness the recent utterances of Canon Henson. The apathy of Christians in this respect is one of the most serious aspects of the case. One has recently written to us, "I have no fear for the Bible; it will hold its ground." True, but what about those who give up the Bible? and what about the thousands who attend the ministry of men who no longer believe the Bible?

The Scripture is clear. There can be no question as to what is the path of duty for every faithful Christian to-day—"Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. ii. 19). It is not a question of churches, chapels, or parties of any kind. Fidelity to Christ is the one test. Philadelphia was commended because amidst great weakness, thou "hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name" (Rev. iii. 8).

Let Christians who feel the state of things get together for prayer. It may be but two or three in one place—let them get together for prayer, for reading the Word, and God will make plain what He would have them do.

But above all, "Cease to do evil." What can be expected from an unconverted ministry,

groping in the utter darkness of "higher criticism"?

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . . what communion hath light with darkness? . . . or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15).

A. H. B.

Outlines of Gospel according to John.

3. THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

(CHAP. IV.)

WE see in Nicodemus a man who, in spite of every advantage and privilege possible for a man in the flesh to enjoy, is nevertheless a lost soul, helplessly wandering on the verge of eternal ruin. A person of quite a different character comes now into view (chap. iv.), one outside of every privilege; far from the place of earthly blessing and destitute of every advantage—a specimen of the mischief and ruin wrought by human will.

The Lord had left Judea because a report had reached the Pharisees that He was making and baptizing more disciples than John. He did not Himself baptize, for He had not come to make a

following on earth, nor to recall Israel's allegiance to a legal and earthly responsibility. His mission was grace; and for Israel it is grace that gathers the poor of the flock first in Galilee. To Galilee therefore He goes; but on His way He must needs pass through this poor world in all the plenitude of His grace—a world which has been the scene of every wicked act that lust, treachery, and violence could be guilty of.

Of this, Sychar was a notable example. Jacob's well was there, and the portion which he gave to his son Joseph, that which he "took out of the hand of the Amorite" with his sword and with his bow. He had purchased it with money, but his sons possessed it by the sword (Gen. xxxiv.). Wearied with His journey, Jesus sits at the fountain. Thither, to draw water, comes the Samaritan woman, alone, as He was alone who sat there, and like Him wearied, but how unlike Him in her way of wilfulness and toil—a wilful scion of a reprobate race and of a city stained of old with rapine and bloodshed.

Jesus addresses her, saying, "Give me to drink." She hesitates and raises difficulties. Such is man, a prey to suspicion, and ungracious. But in *that* Man, so far from pride and prejudice, God was there in grace and lowliness; and had she known it and had asked of Him, He would have given her living water.

He would have given her blessing, which must needs take a threefold form, namely, Life, Light,

and Liberty. Rebellion against the words of God, and contempt of the counsel of the Most High, had brought her into darkness and the shadow of death, and bonds of affliction and iron. She had lived to the flesh, and of the flesh she had reaped moral corruption and an ever-deepening degradation. Unable to rise above the thoughts of flesh, she knew not the free-giving of God, nor who that lowly One was, nor the gift He would have bestowed. Had He waited for her to ask, never would she have received the blessing.

The water He gave becomes, in him who drinks of it, a fountain of water springing up into eternal life. It is divine life in the soul returning, in the power of the Spirit, to the divine and heavenly source in Christ from whence it comes. It is life received as the gift of Christ and answering by the Spirit to the divine Object with which it is in relationship. The Saviour speaks of what He would then have given to this poor woman, captive to sin; but speaks of it according to the fulness of it as known in Himself.

Light, she has no capacity to receive. Life must be graciously given if she is to have it. She is conscious only that her selfish, self-willed life has left her unsatisfied and weary, a slave of the flesh she had sought to gratify. To be free she must find outside of self another and a divine Object.

As yet, however, her thoughts rise no higher than "our father Jacob"—a worthy sire of a soul

so wayward ; and she longs for nothing better than satisfaction and rest for the flesh. The light must enter her conscience, if not to convert, at least to convict ; for it was no welcome necessity that made her say, "I have not a husband." Were it merely light, no soul would be saved ; yet light is necessary if souls are to be saved. Still more convincingly, by the words of Jesus does light stream upon her soul. She says, "Sir, I see that thou art a prophet."

He knew and had told her all things she had ever done ; yet He had freely and graciously conversed with her, prophet as He was. He through whom grace and truth had come was there ; and the grace came first, however much misunderstood. But by it He had won her confidence, Jew though He was ; and she will ask Him about the true place of worship, Jerusalem or Gerizim, around which were centred their mutual antipathies.

But this fully raises in the heart of Jesus the thought of the children's liberty in the Father's presence, and the worship in spirit and truth which it becomes them to offer Him. Neither "this mountain" nor Jerusalem was to be the place of it, though salvation was of the Jews, and earthly privilege, for worshippers in the flesh, centred in Jerusalem. But this was to be a spiritual worship according to the nature of God who is a Spirit, not merely suited to the natural man.

Now, however, a Person dimly rises before the soul of this poor captive of sin and Satan, even Messiah, who is called Christ. She says, "When He comes He will tell us all things." Already she had been moved by the grace and truth which acted from without upon her; but at last, within her, living faith, however feeble, clung to an object, One who "will tell us all things." But Jesus had already told her the "all things" of her own life's history, and He now says to her, "I who speak to thee am He." And she repeats, "Is not He the Christ?"

She is thus brought out of darkness and the shadow of death and her bands are broken asunder. Leaving her water-pot, emblem of her weary toil and soul unsatisfied, and in the freedom and power of a truth that filled her heart to overflowing, she bore testimony to the men of the city of the dignity and blessedness of that lowly One who had indeed given her light, but not without first bestowing the life to enjoy it.

Remark the most gracious way in which the Saviour wins this poor soul. Dark as she was and dead towards God in every way, He first expresses the fullest grace towards her, in spite of her incapacity to understand it. Then pouring light upon her conscience, unwelcome to her as it was, He makes her sensible of an omniscience that took account of all her actions, yet in grace, not condemnation. Convinced of His prophetic spirit she, as a last resource, opposes

to it that great rampart of a false and counterfeit religion which the world, the flesh, and Satan had raised against the truth. But the Saviour in divine wisdom carries on the work from the point which it had reached.

A prophet, as she said, He had told her "all things;" but, life now trembling in her soul, her faith owns a Christ who should tell us "all things." This then must be He; and His own words are divine authority for her faith that He *is* the Christ.

Small as was her apprehension, the Father had been revealed in the Son and by His words to her. This, moreover, is eternal life in its full character, when known in the soul. To her apprehension the light had revealed her sin; but it was in grace, and by Him who, to her faith, was the Christ. We are saved by grace through faith; it is eternal life. Life she had, having drunk of the living water; her measure of light was the condition in which she enjoyed it, but was not the measure of the life itself. How often is this so even yet! The soul may have eternal life, but the enjoyment of it is often limited practically by the limited measure of light received. Nevertheless the life is not the same thing as its conditions. The Spirit is not given by measure (iii. 34, 35). Light, on the contrary, may be received in various and different measures.

Ignorant as the disciples were of the Son's mission and of the Father's work, they refrained

instinctively from questioning the woman or Jesus. A heavenly atmosphere pervaded that scene, strange to them and imposing on them silence, a joy of heart with which they could not intermeddle. But to the Saviour's vision the arid field of this poor world was already ripe with its soul-harvest, and the servant who laboured in it should gather not for a restored earth and a millennial kingdom, but fruit unto eternal life. His wages, too, should be a present satisfaction in the accomplishment of the Father's will, and in the salvation of the souls of men. For it is man alone who is the servant. He it is who sows and reaps, while God alone gives the increase. One man sows and another reaps ; both shall rejoice together when dispensations are for ever passed. Thus all the holy prophets which have been since time began, shall mingle their praises and joys with all whom the Lord sends now to gather fruit immediately for eternal life. For those, indeed, it was sowing work during all the long course of dispensations, which, according to divine wisdom and patience have followed in succession, until the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose. Now, the servant reaps in view of what is beyond dispensation.

How strange a fact, but constantly true in principle, that long before the thought had entered the mind of any of the privileged Jewish people, these Samaritans had apprehended the divine and eternal truth that Jesus was the

Saviour of the world. Yet their state and position, especially that of the woman herself, were the fullest possible outcome of human will, both religiously and nationally, and in her case above all socially. Jesus remains there two days, and then continues His journey to Galilee, and comes again to Cana.

The great hindering cause in the Jewish mind was the demand for signs and wonders to satisfy and convince the flesh. The Lord would and did give signs to confirm feeble faith, to accomplish the promises, to fulfil the word of God, to express the nature and love of God in a suffering world, to relieve the needs of man, and as proof of His power to exercise grace and judgment, but never to satisfy the flesh or to convince unbelief.

In Nicodemus we learn the necessity of divine power and instruction in lieu of the natural thoughts of men.

The point in the narrative of the Samaritan woman is the necessity of faith, and the following incident of the courtier of Capernaum is given to impress this lesson.

God-given faith is the faith that rests on God's testimony because He gives it, and requires no sign or sight to accredit it. So imminent was the case in question, that the courtier could but feel it a fatal delay perhaps to ask Him for sign or aught else, but only to heal his son. Jesus says to Him, "Go; thy son lives." And the

man believed the word which Jesus said to him. Nor he alone, but his whole house believed.

This was a second sign which Jesus did, being come out of Judæa into Galilee. The first sign was done in Cana also, and His disciples then believed on Him. The present case affirms the same principle of faith; and now, more precisely, faith in His Word, as the only means of blessing for the proud because privileged nation. The despised and outcast Samaritans had already learnt it in perhaps a much more simple and blessed way.



Correspondence.

A Correspondent seeks some help:—

“As to the Jewish Remnant's possession and understanding of the New Testament Scriptures. I have supposed that they, in common with the rest of the nation, did not accept Jesus as their Messiah until, Thomas-like, they see Him. But if that were the case, the Lord's directions as to their flight would be lost to them. Yet how can they believe and not know and own, and so have forgiveness for their national sin in rejecting and crucifying Him, thus knowing grace?”

Perhaps some of our readers can throw a little light upon this most interesting question—something short, simple, and scriptural. May we be led to search the Word with prayer! That they will *possess* the New Testament Scriptures there

can be no reasonable doubt. But after the rapture, all that concerns the present Church period will have become a matter of history, even as are now to us God's past dealings with the nation of Israel.

Further, much that has been written (*e.g.*, "Collected Writings of J. N. Darby") since the revival of the truth as to the Lord's coming and prophecy in general, very largely concerns the position, sorrows, exercises, and prospects of the Jewish Remnant in the last days. By the bulk of Christians all this is unread, and, sorrowfully we have to add, little interest is taken in such subjects by them. But all this, and other helps too, will be within the reach of those who, after the removal of the Church, will become the objects of God's interest upon the earth.

That there will be those at that time who will have special intelligence in the mind of God is clear from Dan. xi. 33, 35, xii. 3, 10. By these "the many" will be instructed.

That the Spirit of God will be working graciously in the Remnant in the last days, the Psalms give ample evidence of, providing prophetically as they do the very expressions which will suit their then condition. Whether there will be an acknowledgment on their part of Jesus as the Messiah, before they actually look on Him whom they have pierced, we leave for the present, that all may seek light from the Word.

Signs of the Times.

WE have been asked whether the present course of events in the Far East modifies the views expressed in "Russia's Destiny"?

Not in the least. Ezekiel xxxviii. and xxxix. cannot be affected by passing events. If the Christian's kingdom belonged to this world, the sudden and amazing awakening of the Japanese people might well cause alarm. In the course of a few years they have sprung to the very front ranks as a military and naval power. They, much better than Russia, could educate the vast hordes of Chinese, who only want leaders to become as formidable as their neighbours.

The present check to Russia will doubtless teach their rulers the lesson that national greatness cannot be reached through oppression of the people, and through religious superstition and bigotry.

May we not see in Japan's successes in Korea God's answer to His people's prayers? How many a heart has been lifted in earnest supplication both in private and public prayer that God would protect His people in Korea, and not suffer the horrors of war to hinder His work in

the gospel. Had the Russian soldiery, drunken with victory, swept the Korean peninsula with their cruelties and barbarities, how different would the result have been! Truly God answers prayer in ways His people little expect.

Has not Russia a lesson to learn because of its persecution of the Jews? The atrocities and murders of Kischineff have not been unobserved by high Heaven. Greater judgment yet will fall upon the empire of the North—"It shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against My land, that the heathen may know Me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes" (Ezek. xxxviii. 16). It will be observed that no mention is made in this chapter of *ships*; the great company that will come up upon the land is described as an "army, horses, and horsemen." This is quite in keeping with an association of the Eastern nations under the leadership of Russia; not that the king of the North will be without his ships (Dan. xi. 40), only this will be before the scene described in Ezekiel takes place.

The Roman Empire is specially spoken of as a naval power (Num. xxiv. 24; Dan. xi. 30), for thus only can Palestine be reached by the ten western kings.

Canon Henson has voiced the utter infidelity that is, alas! to be found amongst a large and

increasing number of the ordained ministry of the day, both in Church and Dissent. He speaks of the Bible containing "incredible, puerile, and demoralising narratives." Is he ignorant, or does he assume that his readers are ignorant, of the fact that the very narratives he impugns have been amply verified by recent discoveries? Records are constantly coming to light, turned up by the excavator's pick-axe and shovel, which show the absolute reliability of the Bible. Saving faith can only be produced by the action of the Spirit of God through the Word upon the heart and conscience, but it is presuming upon people's ignorance or indifference to speak of the Bible narratives as a "pack of lies, too gross for toleration." We say nothing of the appalling blasphemy of it—and this from a Canon of the Church!

Christian readers, what Church can this be that tolerates such ministry, or is incapable of dealing with it? Certainly it is not the Church of God! "Be not partakers of her sins" (Rev. xviii. 2-4).

Dr Clifford, rejoicing over the Canon's unbelief, hopes that the day is not far distant when his brethren in the Establishment will break away from the fetters of their system sufficiently to be able to read portions of Shakespeare, Thomas Carlyle, &c., in the pulpit, as he has for long done himself. He is kind enough to allow that the Bible will still, no doubt, be useful for moral instruction!

It is refreshing to turn away from all this to what God is doing for the honour of His name and the glory of His Son. From where we write a mighty movement is taking place amongst the people. Crowds of young and old are attending the gospel meetings, and many are being saved.

Since March last year, when we first suggested times of special prayer for God's blessing to souls, we have heard of multitudes of men, women, and children being converted in the British Isles.

“Pray, brethren, pray! The sands are falling;
Pray, brethren, pray! God's voice is calling.
Yon turret strikes the dying chime;
We kneel upon the verge of time:
Eternity is drawing nigh.”

“What Think Ye of Christ?”

(MATT. xxii. 42.)

WHAT think ye of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him.
As Jesus appears in your view,
As He is belovèd or not;
So God is disposèd to you,
And mercy or wrath is your lot.

Some take Him a creature to be,
A man, or an angel at most !
Since these have not feelings like me,
Nor know themselves wretched and lost ;
So guilty, so helpless am I,
I durst not confide in His blood,
Nor on His protection rely,
Unless I were sure He is God.

Some call Him a Saviour in word,
But mix their own works with His plan ;
And hope He His help will afford
When they have done all that they can.
If doings prove rather too light
(A little they own they may fail),
They purpose to make up full weight
By casting His name in the scale.

Some style Him the Pearl of Great Price
And say He's the fountain of joys,
Yet feed upon folly and vice,
And cleave to the world and its toys.
Like Judas, the Saviour they kiss,
And while they salute Him, betray ;
Ah ! what will profession like this
Avail in His terrible day ?

If asked, what of Jesus I think ?
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say, " He's my meat and my drink,
My life, and my strength, and my store ;
My Shepherd, my Husband, my Friend,
My Saviour from sin and from thrall,
My hope from beginning to end,
My portion, my Lord, and my All."

Perilous Times.

(2 TIMOTHY iii.)

THERE is a period in the last days designated in the Scriptures as "perilous times."

The Holy Ghost through the apostle Paul tells us to know that these times should come, and shows what should be our attitude and conduct in faithfulness to the Lord, amidst the increasing ruin and disorder in the professing Church. "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. iii. 1).

The characteristic features of these perilous times are clearly delineated in this chapter, and they are plainly shown on every hand, in the spirit of the present day. What makes these times so difficult are the prevailing worldly principles, and these in their worst form; false doctrines and seductions under the profession of Christianity, and all passed off as genuine truth, when it is a counterfeit.

A form of godliness is not enough, because there may be that along with a denial of its influence over heart and conscience in one's life. The days are full of deceivers and false teachers, who "overthrow the faith of some" by their seductions, and cause even the enemies of Christ to blaspheme. They will grow worse and worse, for "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and

worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13). It must be so, for God's infallible Word has foretold it, but the truth of God remains ever the same, it changes not, because the Lord changes not. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8). And His Word remains the same. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 24, 25). "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 35). Dear fellow-believer, we rest in our Lord Jesus Christ, and on the Holy Scriptures, in perfect peace and security amid the increasing iniquity of these perilous times. It is sadly noticeable that the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, is largely given up to pleasure. The form of religiousness is gone through by many, then the balance of that day is spent for pleasure, or in social visits. The vast number in Christendom give themselves up to pleasure on that day, under various excuses.

Does this not show there is more love of pleasures than love for God?

On the first day of the week the Lord rose from the dead, and triumphed over everything which was against the believer. He was crucified for the believer's sins; He rose again for his justification on that day (Matt. xxviii. 1-6; John xx. 1-20; Luke xxiv. 1-9; Rom. iv. 24-25, v.

1, 2). This first day of the week is called in Revelation i. 10, "The Lord's Day." It is His day and not our day. That day recalls to the mind of the believer the Lord's love in dying for his sins, and rising again from the dead for his justification; and being the Lord's Day, it should be given up to the Lord exclusively in love to Him. Truly every believer in the Lord Jesus can say, "We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John iv. 19), and that love should be his incentive to live for Him, and wholly serve Him.

"Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." Do these words have their force and power upon the conscience and heart as they should?

Let us ask ourselves the question and answer it before the Lord. How do we use the Lord's Day? And how do we spend our vacations?

Our prayer is—

"O keep us in the narrow way,
That ne'er from Thee our footsteps stray."

Dear child of God, we are not of this world; our blessings are "in heavenly places," not in earthly places. If any are careless about these things, let God's faithful and holy Word arouse them from their indifference to own the Lord's claims over them as above everything and every one else.

Occupy yourself with that Word, and be guided only by its teachings and principles.

The delusions of Satan under high-sounding names are gotten up to hide attacks upon the person of Christ, and the atonement, and upon the Holy Scriptures, which are the inspired Word of God. Such delusions are but subtle revivals of the old errors and heresies of the apostles' day, and openly condemned by them. Oh! turn away from all these errors and seducers. Turn away from that snare of Satan called Higher Criticism. It would take from the Christian the Holy Bible. It would tear out of your heart and conscience, if it were possible, the admonitions and teachings of the inspired five books of Moses, every one of which unfold to us who believe in Christ "the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv. 27, 44).

The teachers and disciples of Higher Criticism, who deny the inspiration of parts of the Holy Scriptures, cannot come under the appellation of "the man of God," for he needs "ALL Scripture" in order that he may be perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto *all* good works, and they only take parts of Scripture.

The "Millennial Dawn, or Plan of the Ages," and "Christian Science" (falsely named) are delusions of Satan, and are apostasy, for the former attacks the atonement by lessening its efficacy; it is a denial of the value of His work on the cross, and the eternal judgment of God against sin, while the latter attacks the Person of Christ, and the whole of Christianity,

and God as Creator. It is not Christianity at all. "Evil men and seducers" are getting bolder, and waxing worse and worse with the deceptions of their own deceived hearts and minds which are blinded by unbelieving reasonings. Your safety, dearly beloved in Christ, is to *continue* in the teaching of God's Word taught by the Holy Ghost, and allow that precious and faithful Word to have its influence over your conscience and heart. Turn ever to it. Cleave closely to it, and to the Lord with purpose of heart, and you will be equipped in the energy of the Holy Spirit for the Lord's service.

It is the Lord's will that we should be aware of these "perilous times," and their characteristic masks, and avoid them. Also, in order that we may be on our guard against error, we are to be fortified with God's Holy Word. Let us not be discouraged, for the Lord would have us go on preaching the Word and the gospel, instant in season and out of season, exhorting, reproving, until He comes. He will give delivering mercies, and He will stand by His testimony and His faithful servants and followers, however small their number may be, and strengthen them as He did His beloved and faithful apostle. The Lord has said, "Surely I come quickly;" let us say from hearts His love has won, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Till then, it is our privilege to continue in the

things learned from the Word, guarded with it, like sentinels on watch, lest the world's principles, religiousness of the flesh, and false doctrines ensnare our hearts and minds. Also *endure* afflictions, and serve and follow the Lord, whom the mass of Christendom reject in practice. There is a crown of righteousness laid up for all who love His appearing, which the righteous Judge shall give "at that day" when He comes. Alas! poor Christendom, thy doom is sealed. Thy judgment as an apostate system is foretold in iniquitous Babylon's ultimate and final destruction (Rev. xviii.).

W. E. S.



Outlines of Gospel according to John.

4. THE POOL OF BETHESDA.

(CHAP. V.)

ANOTHER scene now opens, divinely portraying man afflicted governmentally because of transgressions and iniquities. That mercy was mingled with God's discipline is true; and not the less so that His own earthly people had fallen under the rod of chastisement instead of sitting in the throne of government. Jerusalem has its Bethesda, a house of mercy,

and in its five porches are gathered on that Sabbath day a multitude of sick, blind, lame, and withered.

For those who could help themselves, or could count upon the devotedness of friends, there was hope of healing, if able to avail themselves thus of the divine intervention on their behalf. But Jesus finds one man whose case had now become hopeless. Having sinned, he had suffered thirty-eight years under his infirmity, and not a man had he to help him, so that when the water of the pool was troubled another stepped in before him. He was near indeed to the gates of death, in spite of being in the house of mercy.

Hopeless and sad, his case appealed mutely but irresistibly to the Saviour's compassionate heart. Wouldst thou become well? He asks. But how, for human power fails? One thing alone can meet the case—the word of God. This Jesus speaks, saying to him, "Arise, take up thy couch, and walk." He sent His word and healed him.

The word of God, even as the need of man, knows no Sabbath. To the Jews who opposed ordinances to God's grace the Lord replies, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Equal with God, yet because in manhood perfectly dependent on the Father, He works in grace to accomplish all that the Father has designed in blessing.

Man under law might think that given

favourable circumstances he could perhaps attain to eternal life and resurrection, little knowing that he was under the curse, and soon to be proved so. But into that scene of spiritual death the Son has entered, not helping man to help himself, or restoring his state under law, but quickening whom He will ; so that, to believe His word, as come from the Father, is to have eternal life. Moreover, for such, judgment has no place, they are passed out of death into life.

Sin had brought in death, and judgment followed ; the word of Christ delivers from both by quickening dead souls now. They hear the voice of the Son of God and live. In believing they have already given honour to the Son ; and therefore judgment which is given to the Son that all might honour Him, has no application to them. He has exercised His absolute authority over them in grace, and will not need to assert it in their case by executing judgment. This is reserved for those who have not honoured Him, nor therefore the Father who sent Him.

Thus He quickens and judges with a twofold object : first, that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ; and secondly, that the dead may live by hearing the voice of the Son of God, or be judged by Him, being the Son of man.

At His word the body, too, shall be raised in its due time for life or judgment, according as men have practised good or evil. And the

standard of judgment, or test of this, is not now merely law—one's duty to God and to one's neighbour—but the honouring of the Son in manhood come in grace, and therefore of the Father who sent Him, according to the will of whom the judgment shall be pronounced.

The Lord concludes His discourse by raising the most important of questions, namely, Has such witness been rendered to Him as to make inexcusably culpable those who do not believe Him, nor come to Him, nor receive Him? If they have not honoured Him, why?

The testimony to Him in point of fact was positive, complete, and conclusive. Had He witnessed on His own account His witness had not been true. He bore witness for the Father, and the Father witnessed concerning Him. John, in whom they had boasted for a time, had also witnessed to the truth concerning Him, but only from the point of view of man in the flesh. Yet this should have made his testimony the more convincing to them. But more, His works were a divinely perfect proof that the Father had sent Him, for He accomplished them as perfectly as they were given Him to do. And the Father Himself had personally borne witness; though, to hardened unbelieving hearts, unheard and unseen. Finally, the Scriptures bore irrefragable testimony to Him, as documentary evidence of supreme importance.

All was in vain; He had come in His Father's

name, and they had not received Him. Another would come in his own name and be received. The cause of such incredulity and hardness of heart was a moral one, and not far to seek. They received glory one of another, and sought not the glory which comes from God alone.

They professed to trust in Moses, and thus to reject Christ. But God's Word is absolutely harmonious throughout, whether written down by Moses, or spoken by the Son; and, rejecting Him, Moses himself would be their accuser. Moses wrote of Him, and had they believed Moses they would have believed Christ. But not believing his writings whom they trusted, how should they believe the words of One whom they despised and feared?

The whole narrative makes prominent the power of the Word, whether expressed in the voice of the Son of God, who is Son of man, or in the fourfold testimony borne to Him. This word, moreover, takes a double form; one transient, namely, the spoken words, the other put on enduring record by writing in the Scriptures, both equally authoritative, but the latter for abiding reference.


This word alone it was that availed for Israel, or any soul sick unto death and perishing; but Israel as such was hopelessly sunk in hardened unbelief. Blessing, then, can only be secured in the exercise of purely divine power in sovereign grace, quickening the dead—equally

available, therefore, and as free, for any soul of man, since all were equally lost in consequence of sin.

Nicodemus needed and received divine instruction as to the way of God; the woman of Samaria, the knowledge of God's grace and the gift of Christ. The Pool of Bethesda tells of the word of the Son of God, the efficacious substitute for means of blessing dependent upon man's use of them, and failing, therefore, in their effect.

Hints on Ezekiel.

VISIONS OF PEACE.—Chap. xiii.

NCE more the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, saying, "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel." There were those at that time who pretended to have the mind of the Lord, but who were in reality prophesying out of their own hearts, and had seen nothing.

These false prophets were like the foxes in the deserts, they spoiled the vines (Song of Sol. ii. 15). God had a controversy with His people, and true faithfulness to Him and love to them should have led them to stand in the breach like Moses did of old (Exod. xxxii. 10; Ps. ciii. 23). They should have sought to

reach the conscience of the idolatrous people, and so lead them to humble themselves under God's mighty hand, but instead of this they strengthened them in their sin, and prophesied smooth things. Jehovah was against these false prophets, "Say unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord" (ver. 2).

Man likes to believe what is pleasant to himself, and none will give heed to warnings of judgment apart from a divine work in the soul. Then, too, there are always found those who, from motives of self-seeking or gain, will minister to others what they like to hear.

The same thing is seen in Christendom to-day, for man in every age is the same. "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4). These times, foretold in the apostle's day, have to a very great extent already come. The people will not have the truth, and this disinclination on their part for sound scriptural teaching produces a race of false teachers, which are always far more numerous than God's messengers of truth. Ezekiel stood forth alone in faithful testimony for Jehovah, whereas the false prophets abounded; but Jehovah was against them, and their lying visions would

come to nought. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God ; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. And Mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies : they shall not be in the assembly of My people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God " (vers. 8, 9).

They prophesied visions of peace for Jerusalem, and there was no peace ; it would be as though one built a wall and others daubed it with untempered mortar ; when the hailstones of divine judgment should descend, all their fondest hopes should crumble and fall to the ground (vers. 10-17).

Even so will it be with Christendom. Men will be saying, even as they are doing to-day, Peace and safety, but sudden destruction shall come. All things are ripening for this around us, and the Word of God unmistakably forewarns us that there will be a complete apostasy (2 Thess. ii.). The teachers of Christendom to-day are doing all that lies in their power to hurry on this departure from the truth, in many cases, no doubt, unwittingly ; but God will not hold them guiltless ; both deceivers and deceived will meet their judgment at His hands.

Next the prophet is told to set his face against the daughters of his people, for they, as well as

the false prophets, prophesied lies out of their own hearts. In their case it was for gain that they pandered to the inclinations of their hearers, but in so doing they were dishonouring God as well as denying His word and despising His faithful messenger: "Will ye pollute Me among My people for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread," &c. (vers. 17-23).

But their lies would all be exposed, and Jehovah would be vindicated, even though for a time the righteous would be saddened by their open hostility to the word of the Lord, and the wicked be strengthened in their unbelief: "I will deliver My people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."



Lectures on the Priesthood.

(Concluded.)

A FEW words on priestly service. Some may ask what is their official occupation? No one could trace the inspired account of the service of the "sons of Aaron" without being struck with how much they had to do with the sacrifices. They were constantly serving in the sanctuary—"the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God" (Heb. ix. 6). But they washed their hands and feet at the laver every

time they went into the tabernacle, or drew near to the altar to minister (Exod. xxx. 19-21.) They were also to order the lamps, and were in frequent association with the High Priest. Moreover, as we have seen, they were sustained in their service there by feeding on the various parts of the offerings that were allotted to them. This is communion, and it forms no small part of priestly occupation.

But besides the work immediately connected with the sacrifices and other service of the sanctuary, it was for them on certain occasions to sound the silver trumpets so as to make known the will of God, as they had learned it in the place of His presence, whether for the calling of the assembly or for the journeying of the camps. (See Num. x. 2-8.) Sure it is that only those who now know what it is to abide in the Lord Jesus—our sanctuary—living upon Him by faith, and thus by the Spirit entering into His counsels and truth, will know His mind, and be the fitting instruments for communicating it to their brethren. But observe, it was not a terrifying, harsh sound that characterised this ministry; it was the sweet melody of the silver trumpet that enjoined them thus to be obedient to the Divine will. We should never forget this; for it is one thing to inform our brethren of what the will of the Lord is, but it is quite another thing to do so in the way and spirit which suits Him who is full of grace and truth.

The sons of Aaron, the priests, were to "*blow an alarm*" when the people were to go forward and take their journeys. And who can enjoin their brethren to go forward and onward in their pilgrim course according to the will of God but those who have tasted the blessing and enjoyed the privilege of being in His presence, as set apart for Him, both by the blood of Jesus and by the anointing of the Holy Ghost? How important, yea, indispensable, then, if we would really be a help to others, that we ourselves should have the comfort in our own souls of nearness to God, and happy relationship and intercourse with Him. Again, "When the congregation is to *be gathered together*, ye shall blow, but ye shall *not* sound an alarm" (ver. 7). And who, I would ask, are there in the present day to sound a note sufficiently clear, certain, and distinct for gathering together the members of the body of Christ in His most precious name? Can they be any other than those who know personal communion with the Lord Himself, and the sweetness and joy of being in the sanctuary where Jesus our Great High Priest is, and where His blood is ever speaking for us? Who can know and long that others should taste the reality and preciousness of our being gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus, who is in the midst, but those who realise personal intercourse with that blessed One, who is the central object of the Father's heart, the alone centre of

coming glories, whether celestial or terrestrial, and the only true centre around which, according to the will of God, every member of the body should now by the Spirit be gathered? "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," is a cardinal truth, and as real and fresh as ever.

And further, in time of distress from the oppression of the enemy, the priests were also to blow "an alarm" with the silver trumpet. And why? That they might be remembered before the Lord their God, and be saved from their enemies (ver. 9). How touching this is! for it shows the deep interest in the welfare of God's people, and the sympathy in time of affliction and distress those will manifest who are living in communion with the Lord Jesus, feeding in the holy place, and in a clean place, upon those things wherewith atonement was made. Such go out in heart and soul to God on their behalf. They blow their silver trumpet; for they only can intelligently discern and enter into the blessedness of *going forward* in His name, following Him, of being gathered together in His name, or in times of difficulty thinking on His name, and being saved from their enemies.

In days of gladness, in solemn days, and in the beginnings of months the trumpets were also blown over the sacrifices of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; for holy rejoicing cannot

fail to be associated with those wondrous aspects of Jesus in His entire surrender to God, as well as for the ground that has been laid for our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with one another (ver. 10). The priests then were the great movers in this time of rejoicing and solemn gladness.

The priestly work is now *spiritual*. These shadows instruct us, but they are not the very image. Jesus the Son of God has come, and is gone up into heaven, and has given us the Holy Ghost; and He teacheth and searcheth all things—yea, the deep things of God. We are therefore no longer groping our way in uncertainty and obscurity, for “the darkness is past and the true light now shineth.” We are then “an holy priesthood” to offer up *spiritual* sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”; and we are to offer up *spiritual* sacrifices, not carnal religiousness, “the desires of the flesh and of the mind,” but that which is in the energy of the Holy Ghost, who glorifies Christ in all the variety of His workings in bringing forth fruit in its season. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise”! We read, too, of “sacrifices of joy,” of “presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”; and we are also ex-

horted "by Him to offer *the sacrifice of praise to God continually*; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15). Thus as "an holy priesthood" are we to offer up "sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

We are also "a royal priesthood," to exemplify Christ in all our ways. "Ye are a royal priesthood, . . . that ye should show forth the praises (virtues) of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. ii. 5-9). Thus in every relationship of life, at all times, and under all circumstances, are we to walk as He walked. The office of priesthood is therefore not occasional, but continuous, whether looked at God-ward or man-ward; whether in offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, or in showing forth the way of godliness in daily details. Like every other aspect of divine truth, the relationship is first set forth, and then the entire consecration suited to it. "The sons of Aaron," it is true, had a place of distinction before men, as well as the work of the sanctuary where God's presence was; but they were to be distinguished from others, not so much by their official trappings as by their practical nearness to the place of God's presence, and their life of consecration to Him as those who were marked with the blood and anointed with the oil.

This double aspect of priesthood—"an holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood"—reads deeply serious and practical lessons to us. We

are redeemed to God, children of God, and we are God's; not our own, but His. Hence we are to live not to ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again. As another has said, we have a bright specimen of this double action of priesthood in Paul and Silas when at Philippi. With backs aching and bleeding with cruel scourging, and heartlessly thrust into the inner prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks, not all this suffering could check the outflow of praise from these *holy priests*. Even at midnight they sang praises, and not only God heard them but the prisoners also. Thus we see the living activities of "an holy priesthood." And when in the darkness and stillness of the night God sent an earthquake, so that the prison doors flew open, and every prisoner's bands were loosed, and the jailor himself was so terrified that he drew his sword in readiness to commit suicide, the loving voice of the "royal priest" was solemnly and quietly heard, "Do thyself no harm!" How like the blessed Master, who loved His enemies, prayed for them, and instructed us to do the same! The Christ-like word of kindness, "Do thyself no harm!" was used to bring the stout-hearted jailor down at the apostles' feet, crying out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

The result we are familiar with. Enough has been said to illustrate the difference between "an holy priesthood" and "a royal priesthood."

It is for us not only to enter into and enjoy the various relationships into which the grace of God has brought us, as in His most holy presence, but also to see how, when truly entered upon and enjoyed, they must give a complexion and a character to all our ways. If we really enjoy the blessedness of being inside the veil, where else can it put us here but “outside the camp,” the religious camp? If we are conscious that we are consecrated or “made priests unto God,” and feed upon that which He has provided for our sustenance in a clean place in His most holy presence, and offer up praise to God continually, what else could characterise us here but showing forth the virtues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light?

“Unto Him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

H. H. S.



“Where Sin Abounded.”

THE Word of God differs essentially from any human book. We may take up the loftiest efforts of man’s genius, and with care and application may master their contents.

With "the oracles of God" it is, however, far different. Like the mighty ocean, they contain depths that will ever remain beyond our sounding; as the receding rainbow eludes the grasp of the child, who thinks to reach it by crossing over a field or two, so the infinite God, though brought so near by His revelation of Himself in Christ, dwells ever "in light unapproachable."

In the "Scripture of truth" we feel the impress of the divine mind, and are under the gaze of the all-seeing eye. Here only is the truth told as to man's condition—truth which, once told, the natural conscience must needs bear witness to, but which all the religions of ancient and modern days dared never aver. Here, too, is the love of God, as expressed in the mission and death of the Son of God, to the conception of which no merely human mind ever rose; but when the priceless secret that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16), is imparted by those divine yet human lips, we instinctively feel that this is a worthy and incomparable exhibition of the benevolence of the eternal God toward fallen and perishing man.

But not only in its plan but in its detail is the Book divine. "The words of the Lord are pure words" (Ps. xii. 6). "Every word of God is pure" (Prov. xxx. 5). "The *words* which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," said

Christ Himself (John vi. 63). "Every Scripture is given by inspiration of God" echoes Paul the apostle (2 Tim. iii. 16). Herein lies the deep importance of the allegiance of the Christian to the very *words* of Scripture, and to *every* Scripture contained in the blessed volume. Sometimes well-intentioned friends of revelation forget that, even in the nicest detail, the Word of God should not be altered or adulterated; else is the whole structure dislocated, as we are told that a pebble thrown into the sea will in time displace every drop of water. We have heard a preacher repeat more than once in a discourse from Romans v. 20 that "the law entered that *sin* might abound," an alteration, it is true, of but a word, but one which nullifies the reasoning of the apostle, and indeed states of the blessed God that which is untrue and derogatory, as we may see when we examine the verse a little in detail (*cf.* James i. 13, 14).

As is well known, in the doctrinal portion of this most important epistle the apostle treats of two subjects—"sins" and "sin"—the acts that render me guilty, and the nature that produced them. Chapter v. 11 concludes the first subject. The next verse commences the examination of "sin," the root of the tree, that had borne the terrible fruits alluded to in the first part. "Sin" entered by one man Adam, and the penalty, death, passed universally upon the human family. From Adam to Moses—a period of something

like five and twenty centuries—according to the graphic language employed, “death reigned.” In undisputed sway “the king of terrors” wielded his grim sceptre, rendering men “through fear of death all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. ii. 15).

Then came the law. It is not here to our purpose to consider the circumstances under which it was given, but merely to notice what God says was *His* object in permitting its entrance into the scene of man's responsibility. “The law entered that *the offence* might abound” (Rom. v. 20); “it was added,” says the same writer elsewhere, “for the sake of transgression” (Gal. iii. 19). Now that definite prohibitions are given, within the circumscribed circle of the people of Israel, sin takes a new character, that of “offence” or “transgression”—that is, a perverse *will* is discovered, which works by disobedience to a known commandment. Clearly this is far worse. Man is proved under law, not only to have a weak and sinful nature prone to wander, and proclivities towards that which the holy nature of God cannot approve; but he is discovered to be at enmity with God, and as a result obtains from the law the curse that it pronounced upon every infringement of its precepts.

So that we have brought together the two distinctive companies of mankind—the Jew with “the offence” abounding inheriting the curse

(*cf.* Gal. iii. 10); and the Gentile "under sin," with death reigning still, "having no hope" and being "without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). How thankful we well may be, that it was not only "where *the offence* abounded" that grace has superabounded. This would have left out the poor Gentile hopeless and helpless to his doom. How blessed and admirable is the change as embodied in the sentence at the head of this paper! "Where *sin* abounded, grace did much more abound." Where did sin *not* abound? Universal as its presence and power is in this creation, the free and undeserved favour of a Saviour-God has been more abundantly manifested.

Free as the air we breathe, wide as the open canopy of heaven, "grace" now "reigns through righteousness." Another has now the throne and the crown, and in Him, the blessed glorified Saviour, grace reigns triumphant through righteousness unto life eternal. Not yet has He taken the throne in this world, this would be to crush the rebels. Now He lives to be their Saviour, and it is your happy portion, dear fellow-believer, to tell of such a reversal of the havoc that the first man wrought when he by his sin bequeathed such a solemn heritage to his posterity. "For as by the disobedience of one man the many were constituted sinners, so by the obedience of One shall the many be constituted righteous."

“Abide in Me.”

(NUMBERS xix.).

IT is a sure sign of the existence of the life of God in a soul that it seeks the light. We see this in a remarkable verse in the third of John: “He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

It is not that our deeds are so perfect, or so satisfactory in our own eyes, that we feel they will bear the light of the divine presence without any defect being found in them. Man is weakness, and his weakness makes him selfish, and there may be motives underlying.

Many things we do. But we think of the judgment-seat of Christ now with satisfaction. The light is exposure, and exposure without grace were intolerable, it would be the day of judgment. Exposure in the case of human friendships would be an end to them, but God has no discoveries to make of us. We make discoveries of ourselves, and think, as some unexpected form of depravity rolls up from that pit of corruption, the human heart, that this will surely affect His feelings towards us. But the work of Christ is the divine answer to everything that we could find in ourselves.

We stand in the *satisfactions* of God. The nature in us seeks the light.

“Rivers to the ocean run,
Fire ascending seeks the sun,”

and we seek God. Communion with God is happiness. All the enjoyment and happiness that we have comes from Him, but we use it, like a wild horse, to get at a distance from Him. When we begin to decline in our souls, it is in our communion that we decline first, in the nearest circle. Around the table this morning we are rejoicing over our ruins. We think of what we were, our sin, our distance.

To refer to this chapter, what is striking in it is the way God views man. If we look at the details, everything that is of man defiles, “The bone of a man, or a grave.” Man is before God, so to speak, in his putrescence. He had a favoured family of man, that He took up to prove if anything could be done with man. “What could have been done more in My vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” The wilderness was not God’s purpose, but His schooling for them. They might have come into the land in eleven days, but they wandered in it forty years. “These things are types for us, and are written for our admonition.” But we find the work of Christ is God’s resource, so to speak, from which He draws for all their failure.

Do we not feel that we can draw upon it for everything that may arise? We feel more and more our weakness and vileness as we advance in the divine life. In this chapter the ashes are the death of Christ; and the running water, the Spirit of God applying to the conscience the remembrance of that death, in the case of failure. That we may treat it lightly? Nay, that we may be grieved at it, that we may be shocked at it!

I was thinking of the lines of that hymn we sang :

“That bitter cup, Love drank it up,
Left but the love for me.”

Has He spoken to us while we have been here of what we have been doing all the week? We have met with nothing but love. We come to-day for a little while, why not every day in the week? Why is He as a stranger in the land, and a wayfaring man that tarries but for a night? “He says, *Abide in Me.*” May we think of His love while here, that we may say at least, “I’ll come again.”

(*Recollections of the late Rochfort Hunt.*)

THE world has cast my Master out altogether; I cannot be “hail fellow well met” with those that murdered Him.

G. V. W.

Take Warning!

PROFESSING Christendom, the "Wild Olive Tree" (Rom. xi. 17), is about to be "cut off" for not continuing in God's goodness. When this takes place (and how soon it may occur!), a remnant of Israel, now lost amongst the nations, will be awakened by the Spirit of God to their high destiny as the Head of Nations (Exod. xix. 6; Deut. xxviii. 1, 13). After "the great tribulation" (Rev. vii. 14), which will "come upon all the world to try them that dwell on the earth" (Rev. iii. 10), the Lord Jesus Christ, now on His Father's throne, will come in glory; every eye shall see Him, "and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." He shall come, the Deliverer of Israel, "and turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. xi. 26); and reign as King in Mount Zion from the river to the ends of the earth.

The prophecy of David refers to this wonderful crisis in the world's history. "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my

tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-4).

Again, referring to this bright era in the world's history, a well-known poet writes—

“ He shall come down like showers
 Upon the new-mown grass,
 And joy and hope like flowers
 Spring up where He doth pass.
 Before Him, on the mountains,
 Shall Peace the herald go,
 And righteousness in fountains,
 From hill to valley flow.

Kings shall fall down before Him,
 And gold and incense bring;
 All nations shall adore Him,
 His praise all people sing.
 Outstretched His wide dominion
 O'er river, sea, and shore,
 Far as the eagle's pinion,
 Or dove's light wing can soar.”

MONTGOMERY.

What led to the writing of the foregoing was the reading of an article by a worthy servant of Christ, long since passed away to be with the Lord, but who “being dead yet speaketh.”

“Darkness as gross as that which for ages has covered Israel, is yet to fall upon all the vaunted

enlightenment of Gentile Christendom. They would not 'walk in the light' while they had the light, and it shall be taken from them.

"The saints being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, 'the light of the world' (Matt. v. 14-16) gives place to darkness.

"Out of this darkness, according to the testimony of Isaiah xlix. 6, Israel is to be the first to emerge. She (Israel) is to be new-born to God, with all the throes and anguish of childbirth. She is to be 'chosen' once more in the furnace of affliction ('the great tribulation' before alluded to).

"All that I can say here is, that a little remnant of Judah will first be brought to the Lord amid the cruel persecution of their unbelieving brethren."

And in the judgments of those days—be warned! dear reader, because the moment is so near (Rev. vi. 9-11, xii. 10-17, xiii. 7)—"it shall come to pass, that in all the land (Palestine), saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. xiii. 8, 9).

"Jesus is the name that charms us,
He for conflict fits and arms us ;

Nothing moves and nothing harms us
While we trust in Him."

KELLY.

The foregoing words and poetry are inserted as edifying and instructive for the spiritual understanding of these solemn subjects. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. iii. 22). "The time is at hand" (Rev. i. 3, xxii. 10).

H. P.

Brief Notes on the Seven Churches.

(REVELATION ii. and iii.)

IN considering these chapters, so solemn, yet so full of instruction for our souls, it is important that we should clearly understand the way in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us in the Book of Revelation, as well as the point of view from which the Church or Assembly is looked at there.

In other portions of Scripture, the Epistle to the Colossians, for example, it is the object of the Holy Spirit to fix the attention of the saints on Christ as the Head of the body, ministering all that is needed for the growth and supply of every part—the One in whom all the fulness

was pleased to dwell. This is not at all the aspect in which He is seen in the Revelation. On the contrary, chapter i. brings Christ before us as the Judge, invested with all the attributes proper to such a position. He is there to try and test everything—to see what use has been made of the light and truth given, and the privileges bestowed. He walks amidst the candlesticks or churches—He is there to take cognisance of all that passes, He is indifferent to nothing. This is a very solemn consideration—would it not make us much more careful in our actings in all that concerns the Church of God if we constantly remembered it?

Again, we may view the Church in the place of privilege and blessing as the body of Christ, united to the Head in heaven, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. The Epistle to the Ephesians gives us a rich unfolding of the ineffable grace which has reached down to the state of death in which all, whether Jew or Gentile, lay, on the one hand, and which, out of that condition, quickens us together with Christ, raises us up together, and makes us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. All this is connected with the place of privilege in which we are according to grace.

Revelation ii. and iii., on the contrary, view the Church in the place of responsibility on the earth. The Church was set here as a witness for Christ, a responsible light-bearer in the world.

So, the apostle could write to the Church of God at Corinth and say, "Ye are our epistle . . . ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ." He does not say they ought to be so ; but, in virtue of their place and calling as the Church, they were the epistle of Christ at Corinth.

Now, when we come to consider the seven churches, we cannot fail to notice at once that the number seven is significant : indicating, as is well known, perfection or completeness whether in good or evil. Taking the seven, we have, therefore, a complete survey or outline of the history of the Church, viewed as a responsible witness for God on earth ; and that given by One who sees and knows all, who weighs everything in an even balance, who can form a true estimate of the good as well as the evil, and who searches and tries down even to those hidden springs and motives which underlie the outward condition of the Church. There was, doubtless, a special design in selecting these particular seven churches, and making no mention of others in the same district. Colosse, for example, was quite near Laodicea, yet no reference is made to the former here. It is clear that these seven were selected because their state furnished those elements and principles which were developed more fully later on, and which, therefore, were suitable to delineate the whole history of the professing Church from the beginning to the end.

EPHESUS.

The address to Ephesus comes first, and most suitably so as we shall see. This Church had many privileges—the Apostle Paul had laboured there for two years, as he tells us in his address to the elders, whom he called together at Miletus. The Epistle to the Ephesians was written from his prison at Rome about the year A.D. 64. From that time we have no direct reference to Ephesus in the New Testament till this address in Revelation ii., written about the year 96, that is, for a space of about thirty years. The lapse of time was therefore sufficient to put the Church to the test—that very Church, too, to whom the apostle had been the instrument used of God to bring out the very fullest and highest revelations as to the counsels of God for the glory of Christ, and the peculiar and special privileges which belong to the Church as united to a risen and glorified Christ.

Had we visited Ephesus, we should probably have thought that all was going on well. Outwardly it was so—they had works, labour, and patience; they could not bear evil men; they had tried false apostles—pretended successors of the true ones—and had found them liars. Not only this, but they had borne and endured in trials: they had much zeal and energy, for they laboured and had not fainted. Ah! but He whose eye could see through all and could detect the

inward springs of the heart as well as the outward condition, says to them, "I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love." Be it in the case of the individual or the Church, decline takes place inwardly first, before it is seen or manifested outwardly.

It is unfortunate that the translators of the Authorised Version put in the word "somewhat" here, even in italic print, for it makes it appear as though what He had against them was but a small thing. This was not so; it was fatal if there were not repentance. And what unfoldings of the love of Christ had been brought out to this very Church at Ephesus! "Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. v. 25); and just because His love is perfect, a love unchanged and unchilled by the Church's failure, just for this very reason He feels the decline of love in those who are the objects of His solicitude. It is so even in human relationships; for if we love any one deeply, and we find that their love to us has grown cold, we feel it all the more; just because we truly love them. He does not say, You have ceased to love me altogether, but, You have left your "first love." Other objects had come in, and Christ had not the place He once had in the heart.

Service to Christ is most blessed and important in its place; but if Christ comes to the Church or the individual, and does not find a

ready response in the heart to His love, of what use is outward service? If it does not spring from love and devotedness to Him, it is of little value in His sight.

The first point of decline, whether in the Church or the individual, is loss of first love—if Christ be the undivided object and the heart be right, then other things come right in their place. “Remember,” He says, “from whence thou art fallen.” We often speak of people as having fallen when they have got into open sin, but here the Lord looks on the inward decline as a fall. Then He calls for repentance, and a doing the “first works”—these were works the outcome of “first love.” Not works done as a matter of mere duty or service in a formal way, but works, the spring and source of which, in the heart of the believer, is faith, hope, and love. Knowledge of truth in the mind, soundness in doctrine, a right ecclesiastical position, all-important as these things are in their place, are no guarantee for the maintenance of first love. It is only as we go on in communion with the Father and the Son, as we feed on Christ as presented in the Word, as we dwell on His love in all its depth, its fulness, its devotedness even to death, that this freshness of first love can be kept up in the Christian.

However testing to the heart these addresses are, they are encouraging also. Christ “holds the seven stars in His right hand”: true, He is

there to take notice of all that passes in the Church, and we should never forget this, but He has all power and resources at His command. "To him that overcometh," He says, "will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The promise to the overcomer always has a direct connection with the state of each Church. Adam was driven out of an earthly paradise, and the way was carefully guarded lest he should eat of the tree of life and live for ever: but here it is as much as to say, "If you have not grown cold in your love to Me down here, you shall enjoy it in its unending fulness up there; I will give you the tree of life, and you shall have My presence and My company without an end."

(To be continued.)

Hints on Ezekiel.

IDOLS IN THE HEART.—Chap. xiv.

HERE again the elders of Israel present themselves before the prophet. They sat there with apparent sincerity, but whatever might have been the case previously (chap. viii.), now it was nothing but hypocrisy. Well knowing what they were doing, and in utter disregard of God's solemn warnings of

judgment through Ezekiel, they persisted in setting up their idols in their hearts, and putting the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face; and then to come to God's prophet! At best such conduct was mere idle curiosity, in reality it was sheer hypocrisy. "Should I be inquired of at all by them?" says Jehovah. In vain is it to pursue a path of wilful disobedience and then to come and seek guidance from the Lord. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John vii. 17). Before God will impart fuller knowledge of His truth, He looks for a ready mind to obey.

But now again comes an appeal not only to the elders, but to the whole house of Israel. For judgment was fast gathering around, and each individual would be held responsible: "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols," &c. (vers. 6-12). If any would persist in their sin, and still come "to a prophet to enquire of him concerning Me," the Lord would set His face against that man, and make of him a sign and a proverb, and would cut him off from the midst of His people.

It may be well to observe that all this is a question of God's governmental dealings on this earth; the matter of the soul's eternal blessing in heaven is not here the point.

Even though a prophet might prophesy smooth things to them, yet their idolatry would

bring down upon them a well-deserved, even though long-deferred, punishment: "They shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him" (ver. 10). Yet in all these dealings of God with His people, He kept their ultimate blessing in view (ver. 11). "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. xi. 29); that is to say, He will without fail carry out His promises. A greater sin than that of idolatry was yet to be committed by the Jewish nation, even the rejection and murder of their Messiah; but yet "all Israel shall be saved" when the Deliverer comes out of Zion.

But judgment had to take its course, for the land had sinned, and that grievously. God's "four sore" judgments must descend upon Jerusalem, "the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence"; but yet a remnant should be brought forth—a remnant that should consist of individuals, both sons and daughters, who should break off their sins by righteousness, for neither the personal piety nor intercession of such notable examples as Noah, Daniel, or Job would be laid to the account of any. An individual work of repentance in the soul was needed: "And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord

God" (vers. 12-23). Whatever people may say beforehand, in the end all will bow and acknowledge the righteousness of God's ways in judgment as well as grace. To-day grace reigns through righteousness, by-and-by God will judge in righteousness, and this every tongue will join in confessing.

THE VINE TREE.—Chap. xv.

In this brief chapter our prophet sounds forth once again, though in different style, the judgments that were about to fall upon Jerusalem. Here the warning takes a parabolic form, even as previously it was in the shape of direct denunciation. In the following chapter we shall see that an allegorical style is used, so anxious was Jehovah if by any means He might reach the slumbering conscience of His people.

The vine was a well-known figure of Israel (Ps. lxxx. ; Isa. v.), but through idolatry it had utterly failed in bringing forth fruit for God. "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty," &c. (Hos. x. 1, 2); so had Hosea lamented before, but every appeal from whatever direction it had come had been in vain. Moses had himself forewarned the people on the eve of their entrance into the land, "Hear,

O Israel: the Lord our God is ONE Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart," &c. (Deut. vi. 4-16). They were to keep these words in their hearts, they were to teach them to their children, they were to talk of them while resting in their homes, and while walking by the way; and when blessed with all Jehovah's goodly blessings in the land, then were they warned: "Beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him, and shalt swear by His name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you (for the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth." This judgment was now about to fall, for "My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me" (Ps. lxxxi. 11).

How touching is Jehovah's lamentation: "Oh that My people had hearkened unto Me, and Israel had walked in My ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries" (Ps. lxxxi. 13, 14). But instead of this: "I will set My face against them (*i.e.*, against the inhabitants of Jerusalem); they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them: and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I set My face against

them. And I will make the land desolate, because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord God" (vers. 7, 8). The fault was Israel's and not God's; and as it was then, so is it now: what troubles we bring upon ourselves through wilfulness and disobedience! Oh, for a subject heart, a broken will, and a contrite spirit!

Outlines of Gospel according to John.

5. THE SEA AND THE SANCTUARY. (CHAP. VI.)

THE previous incident of the man infirm for thirty-eight years, but made every whit whole on the Sabbath day by the mere word of Jesus, is used to bring out the power of the Lord to deliver man, body and soul, by the voice of the Son of God, from the whole effect of sin, though by folly and transgression he had brought himself under the judgment of God.

Now in chapter vi., the difficulties are presented which beset man's path and would make void God's purpose of grace for him. The shifting sea of circumstances on the one hand, and the floods of ungodly men are in the way, as well as the more directly Satanic power of evil. On the other, if God has designed to give eternal life and peace to man in resurrection glory, how

can this possibly be accomplished? In either case the intervention of power absolutely divine is needed.

The occasion of declaring the answer of grace to these momentous questions was the Passover. Jesus had remained remote from Jerusalem beyond the Sea of Galilee. Thither the crowds followed Him because of the signs of healing which He wrought. Seeing the great crowd, Jesus says to Philip, Whence shall we buy loaves that these may eat? The faith of Philip had already recognised in Jesus the One of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote. Had he grown in grace and the knowledge of Jesus since that first confession? Had not the Psalms said something of Israel's Saviour? and was not Philip himself a monument of that mighty grace that quickens the dead, and will hereafter raise up the body from the tomb? The Lord had put this question trying him, but Philip had been slow to connect the lowly gracious Saviour with all that the Scriptures had revealed. Had he never read Psalms cxxxii. 15 or cxi. 5? If so, why not say, Lord, give Thou them to eat; they are too many, and too poor to buy? But nothing hinders the perception of grace so much as legality. But even Andrew, ever of a seeking, inquiring mind, finding a little boy with five barley loaves and two small fishes, was fain to ask, But this, what is it for so many? so little able was he to utilise the resources at his hand.

At Jesus' word an expectant, obedient crowd sit down upon the grass. How great a contrast to the feeble, wavering thoughts of the disciples! But they were hungry, and need is the great meeting-point of God and man. In bringing the ark of Jehovah's strength into its eternal rest, it was prophesied that He should satisfy Zion's needy ones with bread (Ps. cxxxii. 15). But how, if they were not hungry? He feeds them, the men numbering five thousand; and twelve hand baskets full of fragments are gathered up. Sufficient was there to fill the crowd that followed Him, as well as all Israel besides.

It is upon this incident that the subsequent teaching of the chapter is founded, clearly setting forth the ministry of grace by which eternal life should be divinely given and sustained in a desert world, while Jesus was on high in priestly service and pending His return in kingly power. The multitude took Him for the prophet of whom Moses wrote, and would have made Him King at once; but His time had not yet come. Heavenly service and heavenly things must come in first, together with eternal life and a Christ on high.

The other question now arises—how to overcome the power of evil which pervades the scene, and seeks to overwhelm Christ's witnesses, the saints of God. Spiritual need is not here the special point, but direct antagonistic energy. Darkness and terror envelop the disciples. They

are on the sea alone at night, and Jesus was not there. A strong wind blows against them, and the sea runs high. All night long they toil in rowing, and make no headway; at length, strength spent, wearied with watching, when night is darkest and coldest, just before dawn, they see Him walking on the sea and coming near the ship. Occupied with their own thoughts and the power against them, feeling instinctively the antagonism of spiritual evil, they fear. But He says, It is I; be not afraid. Willingly then they receive Him into the ship, and it is immediately at the land to which they went. "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven" (Ps. cvii. 29, 30).

The miracle of the loaves tells of divine grace displaying itself where weakness and need were. The bringing of the ship to port shows the divine presence superior to every opposing power. Both these thoughts are intertwined in the teaching which follows.

Pursued for the material food which they had received, He warns the people that true wisdom would work for the food which abides unto life eternal. This food, moreover, He, the Son of man, would give to them, as appointed and empowered by the Father to do so. Himself the Bread of God, the Bread of life, He had come down out of heaven to give life to the world, to

give eternal life, not to sustain a natural and perishable life as the manna ; and even this was not given them by Moses, nor received as if they were entitled to it under law. He that came to Him should never hunger, and he that believed on Him should never thirst at any time—the spiritual need of such was met and satisfied for ever.

None left to themselves, or as Jews under legal responsibilities, would thus believe and receive the blessing. The Father had acted sovereignly in grace apart from earthly promises and outside of all dispensations ; and those whom He gave, according to His own will, came as the fruit of it to Jesus, and were received. Jesus on His part would lose nothing the Father had given Him, and those who believed on the Son should on their part have eternal life. Jesus would raise them up at the last day, so that nothing should be lost.

The discourse up to this point had been addressed to the multitude by the lake of Galilee, and the doctrine had hinged upon His coming down out of heaven to give eternal life. It implied and was intended to teach the incarnation of the Son. But man was intent only upon the food which perishes, and had no faith in, or relish for the Bread of life. These were the obstacles to blessing which nothing could overcome save the will of the Father, and the power and grace of the Son who was the Son of man.

From verse 41 to verse 59, the scene changes to the synagogue in Capernaum, where a controversy arises with the Jews as to the Saviour's declaration that He was the Bread which had come down out of heaven. He still insists that it is vain for man to urge his fleshly objections: he cannot appreciate, so as to come to, the heavenly One sent from the Father, except as drawn by the Father. Those who do come shall be raised up in the last day, for they have come to Him as by the instruction of the Father Himself. Nor was this by direct vision of the Father, which the Son alone has, but that of faith only.

But there is more. The believer has eternal life: it is not merely a future blessing. He that eats the living Bread come down out of heaven shall not die, but shall live for ever, in the joy of unceasing, uninterrupted relationship with Jesus. The living Bread was indeed Christ on earth; but if it was to be for the life of the world He must die. This goes beyond incarnation, even to death itself—a still greater difficulty and stumbling-block to the carnal Jews. But without His death, and faith's appropriation of it, there would be no spiritual life in the soul at all.

Hitherto (ver. 53) the Lord had declared the divine result of sovereign grace and power intervening on man's behalf for blessing, according to the Father's will, in spite of his spiritual and moral incapacity to receive it. He now proceeds to explain the change produced in

the soul. The person to whom Christ's death in grace is spiritual food has eternal life, and his body shall be raised up at the last day. Meanwhile, he enjoys communion with Jesus of life and nature derivatively and in dependence on Him, as He on the Father, and shall thus live for ever.

In this portion of His discourse the Lord brings out prominently the cardinal fact and necessity of His death, if the eternal life and blessing is to be enjoyed. But now a different scene and congregation are introduced. He addresses Himself to the narrow circle of His own immediate following, many of whom murmured and were offended at the truth. It was an earthly Christ they expected and desired. To them He says, "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where He was before?" His words were spirit and life, communicating to the soul what they presented to faith; not, like human teachings, to form the understanding so that man might grasp it. The Spirit Himself used them in living power.

Some of them did not believe, and Jesus knew them, and who the betrayer was; He therefore repeats what He had already said to the Galilean crowd, and also to the Jews in the synagogue, that no one can come to Him unless it be given to him from the Father. Hearing this, many leave Him altogether. Such is the effect of presenting a Christ in heaven, as the

sum and substance of the soul's desire and hope. For it is not enough to have a Christ in incarnation merely, or even in death; for us it must be an ascended Christ, or none at all.

But this narrows the circle to the twelve; and Jesus says to them, "Will ye also go away?" Peter, impetuous, independent, and perhaps self-willed, was at least sincere and devoted, and he answers, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Jesus alone was the "Holy One of God," and He alone had the words of life eternal—that which revealed it, and lovingly communicated it to the soul.

It will be seen from what has been said that man's utter incapacity, both moral and spiritual, as well as death itself, is the great obstacle to blessing. But Jesus, the One sent of the Father to accomplish His will, gives eternal life and dies that all who believe in Him may have it. And not merely as life in their souls, but in the communion with Him of life and nature derived from Himself, and in dependence on Him. But for this He ascends on high. As regards the body He will raise it up at the last day. The One who loses nothing given to Him by the Father is the new especial character in which Jesus is revealed to us in this chapter.


In chapter iii., He is the divine instructor and the object of faith as Son of man lifted up; in chapter iv., the giver of life and liberty in the Spirit; in chapter v., He who speaks

the word that quickens the soul and raises up the body. In chapter vi., He loses nothing, but brings perfectly to pass the will of the Father.

There are here two great dangers which beset the soul and oppose its blessing—on the one hand spiritual famine, since nothing in nature can give spiritual food ; and on the other, everything in nature can be used by the power of evil to wreck the soul and hinder the fulfilment of the Father's will. To meet these the Lord Jesus, the Son sent by the Father, ministers the living bread in grace and overcomes every opposing power. He gives eternal life and raises up at the last day. Thus He loses nothing given Him by the Father, but in grace accomplishes His will.

Fragments.

(Leviticus i., and Numbers xix.)

UR standing is always the same, our state varies. "Of his own voluntary will," should be "for his acceptance." Mr Bellett used to say, "It's not merely an acceptance, but it's a delighted acceptance." It's all Christ, what He is before God.

* * *

Restoration is the end of God's ways with us, and should be the end of any faithfulness on our

part towards our brethren. God does not get rid of us, He restores us.

* * *

The "open vessel" is generally supposed to mean our unguarded thoughts or affections—Christ not being a covering to the eyes. But we have here, when a man dies in a tent, "all that come into the tent and all that is in the tent," the persons and the surroundings or circumstances. If sin has occurred in any family, all are affected by it, and the things around have been perverted from their proper use: they should have been for the Lord (verse 10). Even if you apply yourself to the redress of anything, you become defiled.

* * *

Does it not show how dear to the Lord are our poor communings and intimacy? He provides for us in every detail, when they are interrupted.

* * *

Bright days do not make Christ any brighter, dull days don't take anything from His lustre.

ROCHFORD HUNT.

Correspondence.

Belfast.—Questions as to 1 Corinthians xvi. in reference to the Collections.

EVIDENTLY the collection here spoken of was of a special character, for verse 3 speaks of its being sent to Jerusalem.

It is a striking and beautiful evidence of the grace of God working in the hearts of Gentile believers in sending help to those at Jerusalem, showing that there was no resentment on their part to the religious intolerance that at one time sought to shut out from Christian fellowship those in whose hearts grace had wrought savingly, albeit that they were Gentiles.

But though the collection here spoken of was for a special purpose, the spiritual judgment of the saints has at all times found in this helpful guidance as to other collections connected with the assembly's responsibility, whether in meeting the obligations of rent, or the claims of the Lord's service, or the needs of the poor, if such there be.

Lausanne.—What do you think of Revelation xvi. 12? Which are these kings of the East, who come through the Euphrates? Are they the kings spoken of in Ezekiel xxxviii., Gog with Persia, &c., or are they other kings?

Some spoke of this because of the Japanese War; some think that Russia will be stopped in this war, because other kings of the East, perhaps the Japanese, must come before Gog comes.

WE must always carefully remember that all in the Book of Revelation from chapter iv. and onward is still *future*. Not until the coming of the Lord for His saints, and their removal from this scene to heaven, will the events described from Revelation iv. to xix. begin to be accomplished.

What is now happening in the Far East cannot fail to interest every student of Scripture, for we see how rapidly the nations of the East are waking up, and so preparing to fill the place which the prophetic word assigns to them.

It is clear from Ezekiel xxxviii. and xxxix. that when Gog comes into the land of Palestine, Israel will be there established at peace. Micah v. 5 also shows us that the Lord Himself will be there. Clearly therefore the beast and false prophet will have been destroyed (Rev. xix.).

Now, turning to Revelation xvi. 12, we here learn that *after* the removal of the Church, and before the appearing of Christ in glory, the Euphrates will be dried up. This I take to be figurative. The Euphrates was the boundary between the West and East. We are told that just before the close the way will be prepared—not for the western kings to go to the Far East to fight there (as they are *now* doing), but for the kings of the East (which no doubt includes China, Japan, Persia, &c.) to be collected in the land of Palestine, where the battle of the great day of God Almighty will be fought.

I do not think Scripture warrants us to say that Armageddon will take place just then, for so far as I see that will be the final conflict between God and man before the bright millennial day—in other words, Gog of Ezekiel.

In some way or other the barrier between East and West will be broken down; a terrible

Satanic power will be at work to accomplish this, originating from the very bosom of apostate Christendom. The West should have borne a testimony for Christ to the nations of the East—at that day the mouth of the dragon, the beast and false prophet (Satan's trinity of evil) will send forth a devilish testimony which will marshal the hosts of the East against God Himself.

It is terrible to think that the professing Christian nations have done far more to educate the Japanese in the awful art of war than to lead them to a knowledge of the Prince of Peace.

Evidently Revelation xvi. 12 must be prior to Ezekiel xxxviii. and xxxix., for at the time of Gog the beast and false prophet will have been destroyed, whereas in Revelation xvi. they are still present exercising this Satanic influence upon the kings of the East. The way of the kings of the East will be prepared under the sixth vial, but, as far as I see, the battle of Armageddon will not take place until *after* the destruction of the beast and the kings of the earth in Revelation xix., that is after the pouring forth of the *seventh* vial.

Europe is becoming alarmed, and no wonder, at the irresistible advance of Japan. Many stand aghast at the prospect of the awakening of the millions of China. Already a European Alliance is being seriously talked of, and what will this be but the revived Roman Empire?

Many a surprise is in store for the men of this world. We are told that within the last generation an incredible transformation of the Japanese type of countenance has taken place in a large number of cases. The Mongolian type has given place to a type which bears a much closer resemblance to the Western. We have ourselves seen a series of portraits of many notable Japanese which fully bears this out.

Without asserting anything, is it not possible that some of God's scattered nation, soon to be gathered again, may be found amongst them?

Certain it is that when the time comes for God to say to the prisoners, "Go forth: to them that are in darkness, show yourselves;" when God makes His mountains a highway for the return of His people to their own land, they shall come from far, from the north and from the west, "and these from the land of Sinim" (Isa. xlix. 12). This last it is well known refers to China.

Fellow Christians, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. We are living in stirring times. "Let us watch and be sober." ED.

Matters of detail, such as whether the box should be passed round or not, seem of small moment compared with the state of the heart of the giver—"God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. ix. 7). ED.

Hints on Ezekiel.

THE ABOMINATIONS OF JERUSALEM.

(Chap. xvi.)

AGAIN the word of Jehovah comes to the prophet, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations" (ver. 2). The symbol of the fruitless vine tree had manifested her guilt in a negative manner (chap. xv.), now, the positive side of her iniquitous idolatry is brought to light.

In the first place, Jerusalem's origin is depicted (vers. 3-5). "Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite." Amongst all the evil nations of the land of Canaan, none were more iniquitous than these two (see Gen. xv. 16, xxvii. 46). Such was the source from which Jerusalem sprang, not only morally but historically also, for the city existed before Jehovah adopted her for Himself (see Josh. xv. 8, xviii. 28; Judges xix. 10).

In vivid language the prophet next describes her outcast condition before the Lord passed by and saw her, and the abundance of the blessing that He showered upon her (vers. 6-14).

Though Jerusalem, as we have seen, was one of the cities allotted to Judah by Joshua (Josh. xv. 8) and shared by Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 28), nevertheless it was never completely possessed by

Judah to the exclusion of its original inhabitants (Josh. xv. 63), and indeed it seems to have remained far more under the power of the Jebusites, for it is described forty years after as "the city of a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel" (Judges xix. 12).

Not until the kingdom was established under David did Jerusalem obtain a foremost place in Israel (2 Sam. v. 6), and especially was this the case under the glorious reign of Solomon. Then it was that Jehovah hallowed her with His presence. "I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put My name there for ever; and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually" (1 Kings ix. 3). Decked with every beauteous ornament, her "renown went forth among the heathen," and so we read of the Queen of Sheba, amongst others, coming from the ends of the earth to behold its magnificence (1 Kings x. ; 2 Chron. ix.).

Next, with sorrowful pathos, she is reminded of her unfaithfulness to the One who had been the source of all her blessing (vers. 15-34). The beauty with which she was clothed was in reality not her own. "It was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God" (ver. 14). But Jerusalem trusted in her own beauty, and quickly turned aside out of the way, as an adulterous wife, committing whoredom with every form of idolatry, and entering into unholy alliance with all the nations

around her. Her wickedness was even a surprise to "the daughters of the Philistines" (ver. 27), so low is it possible for the people of God to sink when once they turn aside from Him. It is so in every dispensation, and none need more watchfulness than ourselves, blessed as none others have been.

But now comes the solemn denunciation of judgment (vers. 35-43). "Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord." She who had once been covered with Jehovah's ornaments, would be stripped and left naked and bare; the high places of her idolatry would be thrown down, and her houses would be burned by fire, and that by means of the very nations whose friendship she had sought (ver. 37).

The last clause of verse 43 has been remarkably fulfilled—"thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations"—for since the Babylonish captivity, Israel has not again fallen into the sin of idolatry.

Next, the sin of more highly favoured Jerusalem is shown to far exceed that of her sisters Sodom and Samaria (vers. 44-52). The proverb was true—"as the mother, so her daughter"—for she was discarded from the idolatrous nations of Canaan (ver. 45). She pretended to judge the abominations of her sisters, yet had she gone beyond them in her guilt, and was become "more abominable than they" (ver. 52). By her own excessive idolatry she had even by

comparison justified her sisters ; but the time will yet be when the guilty people will humble themselves with shame and confusion of face (ver. 52).

The close of the chapter (vers. 53-63) speaks in no uncertain manner of a day of coming restoration and blessing, on the ground not of law but of sovereign grace. On the ground of law all had failed, Jerusalem had "despised the oath in breaking the covenant"; but Jehovah's promise of unconditional blessing He would not forget: far from that, He would establish it as an everlasting covenant.

All this looks forward to a still future day. The return from Babylon does not answer to all that is here stated, for then Judah only, and that but in part, was brought back from captivity. But here both Sodom and Samaria are linked with Jerusalem in blessing; verses 55 and 60 are conclusive as to the time being that of the nation's profound humiliation and repentance, not only for the sin of idolatry, but for that of crucifying their Messiah.

When the Jews, restored to their own land, shall look upon Him whom they had pierced, then in deep sorrow will they mourn; but when the pardoning grace of God has filled their souls, their mouth will, as it were, be shut, "when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord" (ver. 63). There is nothing that so humbles the soul in the dust before God as a deep sense of His pardoning grace.

Outlines of the Gospel of John.

NO. 6.—LIVING WATER IN THE DESERT.

(Chap. vii.)

THE foregoing chapters have fully developed the state of man in nature and in grace. In result Jesus would no longer walk in Judæa, because the Jews sought to kill Him. In proportion to the religious privilege enjoyed was there murderous rancour and antipathy to the truth. Jewish ordinances were religiously observed; but the Divine reason for them was wholly wanting, for the One of whom they were designed to testify was wholly rejected.

The feast of tabernacles was near—the feast that spoke of the joyful accomplishment of promise and purpose in bringing God's saints into the land of His inheritance. But He who alone could really do so (for neither Moses nor Joshua had given them rest) was not believed in even by His brethren. The earthly scene had become a world of moral darkness and the enemy's power—for God a wilderness, a fruitful land turned into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein.

Hated by the world, for He bore witness that

its works were evil, Jesus abode in Galilee. He did not go up to the feast, for His time had not come to fulfil it in Divine power.

When, however, His unbelieving brethren had gone up, then Jesus Himself went, but as in secret and for the purpose of ministry. Teaching in the temple, He lays down the golden rule for judging as to religious teaching. There are two sides to this rule—one subjective, for without a true moral condition it is impossible to discern the truth; the other objective, for if the person who testifies is not Himself true, the testimony cannot be relied upon. The doctrine of Jesus is known to be of God by all those who desire to practise the will of Him who sent Him, so truly and perfectly did He present the Father's grace. On the other hand, He was absolutely dependent upon and devoted to Him who sent Him, seeking solely His glory, the undeniable proof that He was true and unrighteousness was not in Him. In contrast with this, these law teachers who opposed ordinances to grace gave no true practical expression of the law which they professed to revere, nor were they obedient to Moses who gave them the law. Moreover, they broke the Sabbath to circumcise a man, so that the law of Moses which veiled God's glory might not be violated; why then should they be angry because Jesus, who revealed the Father, had made a man entirely sound on the Sabbath day in order to express grace? Before they

could judge Him and His work, they had need to judge themselves ; then would they be glad of the grace He brought. Till then, their judgment was according to sight only, and not righteous ; for the religious guides of the people had now deliberately conspired to kill Him.

Of this intention the crowds were ignorant ; though it was well known to the Jews of Jerusalem, ready as they were to be swayed by their rulers, and to judge of Him adversely by reason of the grace which associated Him with the poor of the flock in Galilee. Ignorant of this grace, and priding themselves upon their carnal knowledge, Jesus, still teaching in the temple, shows them that they were necessarily and culpably ignorant of the Father who sent Him, source of all this grace.

This still more strongly accentuates the difference of judgment among the people. Some sought to take Him, but many believed on Him, and point to the signs which He had done. Alarmed at these conflicting views, the Pharisees and chief priests send officers to take Him. The Lord then distinctly declares the course He was about to take. A little while only would He remain with them, and would then go back to Him who sent Him. What a proof of man's hardened rejection of grace ! and how fatal the results ! They would seek Him when it was too late, and be for ever excluded from the place of blessing. Such is ever the case with legalists

and those who claim a title in the flesh to earthly religious privilege.

Turning now away from their unbelieving thoughts, Jesus in the last, the great day of the feast, stood and cried, "If any one thirst, let him come to Me and drink." Parched up as they were with unbelief, if but one felt his need and believed on Him, out of his belly should flow rivers of living water. But this He said concerning the Spirit which they that believed on Him were about to receive. The Jewish "tabernacles" was but an empty name. The promises were unfulfilled, the place of privilege an arid waste. But this was the consequence of Israel's failure in responsibility. The Man who could take up Israel's responsibility and answer to it perfectly, had indeed come, but been rejected; and now instead of taking up Israel's cause, He would be glorified in a heavenly way, and instead of fulfilling "tabernacles," He would send the Spirit to produce the state on earth corresponding divinely to a man in heaven. Rivers of living waters should flow forth from individual souls, turning the wilderness (for this the world still was) into a standing water and dry ground into water springs, as thirsting souls received the ministry of that heavenly Man in the power of the Spirit.

The crisis now goes on rapidly to its development. Divergent thoughts multiply and become defined among the crowd. Some said, This is

truly the prophet; others, This is the Christ. But His origin by repute from Galilee, not from Bethlehem, stumbles them. He must now be received, if at all, not because of prophecy, but for His own sake only. The power of His words simply convinces the people, confounds the officers, and disconcerts the schemes of the Pharisees and rulers, but at last spurs into expression the lagging faith of Nicodemus. Here, then, was one who felt his need, and was prepared to judge righteously and take part with a prophet out of Galilee. However feeble, it was evidently the desire of Nicodemus to do the will of God, and to own the perfect faithfulness of the One sent by Him, even though this confession must ultimately lead him outside of earthly religious privilege altogether.

Meanwhile every one went to his home, but Jesus to the Mount of Olives—they embarrassed and revengeful; He alone, unmoved but confident in His path and of His Father's love, of which He was personally the blessed and divine expression. The great subject of this chapter is clearly grace conferring life in the power of the Spirit through faith, in view of Jesus being glorified and thus communicating blessing for perishing souls in a barren world.

How can I be afraid in the day of judgment when I shall be like Christ Himself?—G. V. W.

Brief Notes on the Seven Churches.

SMYRNA.

NO word of reproof is spoken to this Church. Theirs was a position of trial and poverty—just the last thing naturally we should like. The address comes in most suitably, according to the divine order, after that to Ephesus. We have already seen that the root of decline was in the loss of first love to Christ. The Lord then allowed the trial of persecution in order to arrest decline and recall the heart to Himself. This is often the case with the individual as well as with the Church. Not that trial necessarily takes the form of outward persecution; it may come in various ways. The devil was, it is true, the one who stirred up the persecution; God may allow him to do so, just as He did in the case of Job, but it is for our good and blessing in the end.

The attitude in which the Lord Himself is presented to this Church is full of encouragement and consolation—the First and the Last, who became dead and lived. He too had been in this world and had met with all the power of Satan, He knew what trial and reproach were. He had passed through death, voluntarily on

His part, and now He was alive out of death. If He marks out the path for His people and encourages them to fear none of those things which they were about to suffer, it is the same path in which He has walked Himself, and He places a limit to their time of trial. Speaking historically, the state here described would cover the period of persecution under the heathen emperors, which closed about the year 310 A.D. ; but, as in the case of all these addresses, the moral principles are found at all times and should be taken to heart by us as well as by those addressed in the charge.

But if Satan was active in raising untoward persecution, he was also at work in another way. Another form of trial here was the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. This expression must not be taken to refer to literal Jews ; it has the same kind of symbolic meaning which we find so often in the Apocalypse. It was opposition from those who laid claim to an ancient and venerable religion, who boasted of the law, the ordinances, &c. These Judaising teachers were a pest and plague of the early Church, as we learn from the Epistles to the Galatians, Philippians, &c. People will readily follow what accredits man in the flesh, and gives a place and standing and dignity to the first man. True Christianity, on the other hand, makes absolutely nothing of man, for his history is ended in the cross of

Christ ; and all who are born of God are brought into the new creation, where man after the flesh has no place, but where all things are of God. It was this Judaising spirit, a worldly religion, adapting itself to man in the flesh, but really a satanic counterfeit of the true gospel, which grew to such proportions, as time went on, in the early Church. It is striking to notice that, where God again revived the true gospel in its fulness, as we shall see was the case in the church at Philadelphia, we find the same satanic counter-movement to supplant the truth.

How graciously the Lord encourages them here ! Were they subjected to trial, imprisonment, and death ? Well, He says, be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. It is His own gift, and it is life in association with Himself. So also the promise to the overcomer is in perfect accord with the state of the Church—he will in no wise be hurt of the second death. Some of them might be slain, many indeed willingly gave up their lives rather than deny Christ and the truth, as history records ; death might reach the body, but it was only for a little while. The second death, which is the lake of fire (chap. xx. 14), could in no wise touch them.

“We know that when Christ shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Walking in the Power of the Spirit.

IT is remarkable how we are bid to do as most easy the things which we all find the most difficult—"rejoice always," and in Hebrew xii., "laying aside every weight." It is not so easy, but there is a secret—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Walking in the power of the Spirit, we are above the circumstances. Paul was living with God and did rejoice, and got above things in the power that was working in him and with him. It shows us, while it humbles us, what is the true state of those who are walking in the Spirit; it is attainable to us if we have not got it.

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But it is experience, though this is quite another thing from looking to experience as a ground of salvation, or looking back at it to form my estimate of my standing before God, which brings the soul under law; that would be taking up Christ as a Judge, instead of a Saviour. Many persons, fearful of lowering the standard of holiness, confound these, and mix up the question of holiness with righteousness. We don't get the power for holiness till we know what righteousness is (*i.e.*, till we see what God is, and that for us).

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Christ's work and perfect value show me what God has been for me, and not what I have been for Him. He is my Saviour, not my Judge. He has made my home in His Father's house, though I was a poor prodigal.

The Holy Ghost makes me know that I am in Christ, and Christ in me ; but in coming to this I have nothing to do with experience. I can't *experience* Christ being righteousness, I must first *believe* that. God won't have anything but simple, absolute faith. On the other hand, the saints ought to look for the experience of God in everything, and be uneasy if He is not there.

When my righteousness is settled before God, I can enjoy His holiness. "Accepted in the Beloved" is a settled thing, and Divine favour resting on me as it rests on Christ. The moment I make a question of fitness for such a place of blessing, I'm back again to law and making something of myself, and looking for something *in* myself. Christ in our hands is the only passport into God's presence. The measure of my acceptance is the value of Christ.

It isn't simply that I have life, but He that died is become my life, and I have died with Him. God condemned sin in the flesh on the cross. I am crucified with Christ, and am done

with the flesh, and never turn back to settle anything about it. It is all done away in God's sight, and I am passed out of Adam into Christ.

Until that is known, we never get true rest; we can never glorify Christ or know what true affections are, because I must have a child's love and not a sinner's fear.

Suppose I fail, Christ is my righteousness. He is never less than that. He may correct and chasten if need be, because we are His children, but it is all in grace, because He wants our hearts. He says to us, "I want you in the path of faith to walk along with Me. I am not going to take you out of the world, but I would have you walk with Me in it." We are in the wilderness, where evil snares and temptations abound, and Satan ever seeking to lead our hearts into trouble—pleasure, or care—anything that leads the heart away from God. Our whole associations and relations of life are in heaven, and we are called first to manifest Christ down here—our spirit continually with God, and representing Christ down here, is the true idea of a Christian. Our path has two parts in it—joy up there, but always trial and temptation down here.

If we were always walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, we should be walking as Christ walked. In this chapter (Phil. iv.) the walk is looked at as being in the power of the Spirit

above every difficulty. Chapter ii. tells us how He walked, blameless, harmless, without rebuke ; we shouldn't be content if our life isn't this.

“Rejoice always.” He would have us always in joy. If a Christian has walked carelessly, if he has even had evil thoughts, he can't rejoice. It may show us what a patient, gracious Saviour we have got, but that makes us sorry for failure and not rejoicing.

Can you say to one who is not a Christian, “I would to God you were as I am?” Do you wish that others were such as you?—not reasoning and saying, “Yes, I am a Christian and you are not ; I wish you were one,” but the joyful outgoing of the heart, “I would to God you were altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” Paul could say this, because he had real, thorough happiness. He was shut up in prison, but he was shut up with Christ. There is no binding the spirit of the man that has got Christ in him. The world would not know what to do with the man that was all Christ in his life, and gets Christ by his death.

Sorrow always accompanies such joy. Joy in God makes me sorry for those around who know Him not, and love flows out. If I live near to God and Christ dwells in my heart, I am more sensible of the condition of the world

and of the evil in it. My place is in Christ—my life, my righteousness, my joy are in Him, and nothing touches that joy. He has gone where it is safe. The effect of this is that my heart is filled with the joy and love of that place, and yet I may be sorrowful if living near to Him, for He was the Man of Sorrows.

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How can I witness for Christ if it is not Christ that comes naturally from me?

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Our armour must be always on, for this is not our resting-place. A false step will make one trip; so we are to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace—perfect, blessed peace, God's peace. Christ has made this place good for me. He is the centre of it all. He is all and in all to me. Each step should bring thoughts of Him, but, alas! we don't always think of Him; then weakness and feebleness come in. When we have Christ in us, then our path becomes exercise, but the effect is, that Christ must come out.

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Everything you meet with in the world is one of two things, either a temptation or a test of obedience. You either yield to the temptation, or having your heart exercised about it, meet it in the power of the Spirit, and are victorious in that power.

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We are not taken out of trouble and difficulties, but no trouble or difficulty need overcome us. "I can do all things through Christ." If I have got Christ's joy in the heavenly place, I have His love down here. With gentleness and meekness I go through this world letting my moderation be known, for the Lord will soon come. It doesn't matter if things go against me. He will settle all my rights. I need not be careful to maintain them.

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"Be careful for nothing; but with prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request, be made known unto God"—not get the certainty that the thing is the Lord's will and then pray for it, but carry before God everything that is in your heart. You belong to Him. You are His child. Count upon His love and tell Him all. Then thanksgiving will go up with prayer, because I know He will do everything for me. He is certain to answer me, and in a wiser way than I could have thought of.

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He does not say you will keep the peace of God, but *it* will keep your heart and mind, and it does pass understanding. Things that trouble me don't trouble Him, so I just carry them to Him and He bears them, and gives me peace by showing me that I have a perfect interest in His heart. He could not say, "Be careful for

nothing" if there were not things to be careful about.

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If we have not our hearts in heavenly places we cannot have these exercises here. Christ had a joy in fellowship with the Father, and this He shares with us ; nothing can separate us from His love. He was in the Father's bosom all the time walking through the world meekly, and finding His heart relieved by exercising love. He lost His weariness in the exercise of love towards the poor vile woman at the well.

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The secret of all this is that Christ is all ; that is the rest of our hearts. Here we shall have conflict and temptation, but when I turn to God there is no conflict, all is sunshine, all is favour. He is with me, and He is going to take me to Himself.

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May He lead our hearts to know more about Himself now. There may be parts of our hearts not yet subdued. Are there no things that contest Christ's place in your hearts? It is a different thing from fighting the enemy outside to have left the door open and so let something come in that takes His place. May the Lord give us to rejoice in Him always, and with a single eye know Him to be our all in all. Amen.

*Notes of a lecture by J. N. D. on Philippians iv.,
given at Kennington, 14th July 1869.*

Remarks on Hebrews ix. 24-28.

IN this Epistle we have a roll of the services of the saints of God, and therefore we might expect to find in it some account of the services of the Lord Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. Accordingly, they are its subject. Other eminent servants of God only serve as the background to display Him. And it will be so with us. We shall be in heaven, the relief, so to speak, on which God will display Christ, each of us reflecting Him, and it will be our delight to be so.

The appearing in the last verse is rather, "*He shall be seen.*" It applies to Israel, who will look on Him whom they have pierced, but includes our seeing Him at the rapture.

At His first appearing "*He was manifested.*" He was done with sin by his first appearing; when He appears again, He has nothing to say to it, His enemies are consumed. "Whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming." The very brightness of His appearing destroys the man of sin.

"In the end of the world" should be "In the

consummation of the ages." The history of this world, the history of man, was closed by the cross. The arm that will execute judgment is suspended for awhile, while grace gathers out the elect and unites them to the Man who is seated at God's right hand.

You say, "That is my Saviour, tell me more about Him." Every ray of the glory shows the value of His work. The glory with which He is surrounded only enhances the preciousness, the love, and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The most precious thing in heaven has died for the vilest thing on earth—you and me.

Mark the *finality* with which the Holy Ghost speaks—"Once in the end of the world hath He appeared"; He was "Once offered"; "One sacrifice for sins." These are great facts. We have His past work on the cross; His present work of grace; and His future work of glory.

Notwithstanding all our lightness, and frivolity, and failure, we are among "those who look for Him." "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." The eternal weight of glory will not be ours in proportion to the steadfastness of our gaze at the things which are unseen.

If that were so, it would be but a poor complement of the glory we should possess.

ROCHFORD HUNT.



My Spikenard.

IF there be one thing more than another that one desires for oneself first of all, and for all the beloved children of God, it is that constancy of affection towards the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, our precious Saviour, that is implied in the word "devotedness."

In accomplishing the mighty work of redemption, that has glorified God, and saved our souls, the blessed Lord has acquired a quite peculiar claim over His ransomed people; and we may say in truth, that He has endured the untold sufferings of Calvary, not merely that we might be delivered from going down to the pit, but that He Himself might become the commanding and supreme object of our renewed affections. This blessed and happy response will be rendered assuredly without hindrance in the eternal day that awaits us beyond this valley of the shadow of death; indeed in the Apocalypse, when the door of heaven is opened (chap. iv.) and the whole scene is expanded before the gaze of the beloved disciple, it is to present the fact that spite of the outside place afforded Him in the

closing epoch of Christendom (Rev. iii. 20), the Lamb is the supreme object of heavenly worship and delight.

But that which is specially grateful to His heart to-day, is that in the time of His "kingdom and patience," He should be to us the governing motive of our lives; and when our souls have learnt somewhat of His worthiness and His glory, if our eyes but rest upon that face whence there shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God (2 Cor. iv.), it is not difficult to count all things but loss. "The glory of that light" fills the vision of our souls, the eyes of our hearts, as it did that of Paul the apostle. May God disclose this face more clearly to each one of us!

The voice of the King's beloved in the Song of Songs expresses this attachment to His person, and joy in His presence, when, as brought into His chamber (i. 4), and beholding Him at His table, her spikenard breathes forth her thanks and worship in grateful perfume (ver. 12). She may have much to discover of her own dulness and unworthiness, but His faithful love triumphs in the end, and He becomes the chiefest among ten thousand (chap. v. 10), while she learns the wondrous secret, "I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me" (vii. 10). The love that "many waters could not quench, nor the floods drown," has overcome every obstacle.

John xii. contains the well-known scene in the house of Bethany, where that heavenly Stranger, soon to depart out of this world and go to the Father, reclines at table in the circle dearly loved of His heart. It was six days before the passover, when the blood of that Lamb whom God had provided (Gen. xxii. 8; John i. 29)—that “precious blood”—should be shed, and the grave that had opened for Lazarus should close upon the Son of God. With what joy had those two devoted sisters received again their brother from the dead, and what feelings of thankfulness and gratitude would animate the reunited household, as their Lord and Master, who had borne and dissipated their sorrow, came into their midst to share their joy! It is not now the King at His own table, but the King in lowly guise, a stranger in the creation of His own hands, come down to be a Man of Sorrows, and to take a place, in perfect grace, at the table of those who had been in sorrow, that He might win the confidence of their hearts.

How blessedly fruitful in at least one case had been His stoop the sequel proved, for there in the presence of the joy of Lazarus, the service of Martha, the interest of the disciples, the covetousness of Judas, one heart is moved in its deepest depths. To Mary the thought that overpowered all else within her was that the One she had learnt to love and reverence was going to death. Of what value was even the

tenderest tie of earth, or its most precious objects, if He, the Lord of all, the Resurrection and the Life, should find but a tomb. For her the hopes of earth closed for ever in the death of Jesus, and she dedicates to Him, to those blessed feet, her very costly spikenard; for all lost its worth in the estimation of the heart that knew that Christ was to be numbered with the dead. To see how very far distant from her apprehension of the moment was the discernment of the others, one has only to read the selfish objection of Judas (into which, alas! the eleven fell also, *cf.* Matt. xxvi. 8), and the divine approbation and vindication of the Lord Himself. "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this," is the proof that if all should misinterpret the deed, Jesus understood it. No wonder that the whole house was filled with the spikenard's odour, for Mary had chosen "that good part," the self-effacement that could be willing that all she held as of value here below might descend with Him to the tomb.

Such is the beauteous "fruit in its season" that the love of Jesus produces in this barren world from hearts like our own. So is manifested that "first love" of the saint, which would go even to death (John xiii. 37) for the sake of his Lord and Master. Yet how we need to be sustained by His power in such a path of devotedness, else we lose our first love as did Ephesus (Rev. ii. 4); or like Peter learn by sad and bitter

experience, that, except we are energised by a force more powerful than natural affection, our love will quickly cool, and we shall deeply dishonour Christ. But thank God, He keepeth the feet of His saints (1 Sam. ii. 9; Prov. ii. 8), and is able to keep us from falling (Jude 24). By His intercession on high, and the washing of our feet by the way, our gracious High Priest is able to sustain our renewed affections for His person, and maintain the freshness and bloom of "first love."

In none of his saints is this power more manifested than in Paul the apostle, when from his Roman dungeon he writes to his beloved Philippians, being now "such an one as Paul the aged." Well-nigh thirty years had come and gone since the "glory of that light" revealed a Saviour to his soul, years full of unremitting toil and suffering, and "besides those things that are without . . . the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. xi. 23-28). Yet now, arrived at the end of his course, he is separated from those individuals and assemblies so dearly loved, and the devoted servant learns about this season that "all Asia had turned away from him," and even among those who had been a joy and refreshment to him, some were "ashamed of his chain" as "the prisoner of the Lord" (2 Tim. i. 15, 16; Eph. iv. 1). Yet in his letter to the Philippians we find no vain repinings, no regrets. He has counted the cost, and in chapter iii. the

aged man says, while recalling what he had done so long before (ver. 7), "I *counted* loss for Christ those things that were gain to me." He goes over the list of what he took pride in—not bad things—but things that the flesh could glory in, made more attractive by this, that though they belonged to an economy that had passed away, they came from God Himself. He knows their value, he had felt their power, yet so had he learned Christ, that there is no flinching now in his soul. "Yea, doubtless," he says, "and I *do court* all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things" (ver. 8). I seem to see him there, his box of spikenard (as it were) in his hands, devoting to that glorified Lord all that he held precious. All had descended with Him to the grave, and the desire of his soul now is that he may "by any means attain the resurrection *from among* the dead," a place with Christ in a deathless scene of glory. And if that prisoner could find in the offering sent through Epaphroditus "an odour of a sweet smell," we may say that for the heart of Christ that prison cell was "filled with the odour of the ointment."

May the Lord teach us what this devotedness is that dedicates all to Him as an intelligent service (Rom. xii. 1).

F. L.

Correspondence.

Ilford.—“Bring with Him” (1 Thess. iv. 14)—to where? Is it to glory, or is it afterwards when the Lord comes forth, as in Jude 14?

THIS seems to be the *general* aspect of the subject, without entering into the distinction between the rapture and the appearing. In fact, the truth of the rapture had not yet been revealed, and is added in verses 15-17 to explain *how* those that had fallen asleep would be able to come with Christ when He comes. It would appear that the Thessalonian saints were expecting the return of Christ to set up His kingdom. The unbelieving Jews brought this charge against the apostle, that they said there was “another king, one Jesus” (Acts xvii.). Evidently Paul had included in his testimony there that the Lord Jesus would return to reign. It was this that they had in mind when some of their number were called away in death. They argued that these would be absent from the joy and glory of that kingdom. No, said the apostle; when Jesus comes, God will bring them too. But at once the difficulty would arise, How can they come with Him seeing that He is in heaven, and they in their graves? Here a fresh revelation is made that explains all:—“The Lord Himself shall descend,” &c.

Outlines of the Gospel of John.

7. LIGHT IN GOD'S HOUSE.

(CHAP. viii.)

JESUS alone meets the need of the soul, and, being glorified, gives the Spirit as the power of life, and for testimony to flow out for the blessing of others in a desert world. This is the subject of chap. vii. Chapter viii. speaks of the freedom which the Son gives in view of His own place and relationship; this freedom being in the light, for He is the light of the world and of life.

Life and light are thus again precisely distinguished, however closely connected. Grace bestows life freely (chap. vii.). Light is the condition of its existence, and forms the character of its responsibility (chap. viii.).

The teaching of this chapter is based upon the remarkable scene in the temple when the crucial question was raised whether the principle which governs God's house is law, imputing offences and condemning the guilty, or light which searches the conscience, and, while it exposes, spares the confessed sinner.

The occasion was unique, and to a legal mind unanswerably in favour of law; but human justice

is proverbially blind, and most certainly light is foreign to the legal thoughts of men. Taken in adultery, in the very act, could such be brought into the house of God and remain uncondemned? When Phinehas executed judgment in like circumstances, was it not counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore? Were the woman to go free, the name of God would be grievously dishonoured, or He were no longer righteous. Will He condemn her and belie His ministry of grace, or deny the character of God and let her go? Jesus will not condemn her, and yet will maintain in the highest way the glory of the Father; for He has not stooped to this poor earth, and even to the dust of it, in order to administer the law, but to bring in light divine, which makes everything manifest. It is not a law-measure merely of man's responsibility in the flesh, but the nature of God, which is light, before whose eyes all things are naked and laid bare.

This light reaches all that come within its range, and that in grace, where submitted to. Those who refuse it are driven out from the presence of Him who is it.

Jesus leaves them a few moments to the shame which even nature would have taught them. But in vain: conscience, hardened by malice and envy, was proof against His gentle but significant silence. Thinking Him to be caught in their snare, they press their

question. In reply, He flashes the light of conviction upon their consciences, not charging them with any specific offence, nor in any wise exculpating the guilty, but raising in their own conscience the question of their state, whether, being what they were, it was seemly in the sight of God that they should act as judges. As for Himself, who alone was left, and qualified to do so, He would not act as a legal judge, nor condemn. He was the light of the world, dispelling darkness for all who were attracted by His grace, and giving light to them instead—that in which the life which grace gives was enjoyed—the light of life.

Who but Himself could witness of the light! Certainly the Pharisees, who judged according to the flesh, knew not the path of light. He alone knew and revealed the Father, from whom He came and to whom He returned. Refusing His testimony, their souls would sink into an ever-deepening darkness and sin, as well as a hatred of Him who was the light. As yet in long-suffering, He shed light upon their consciences, and the Father also bore exclusive testimony to Him in tokens of manifested delight. But, His testimony completed, their own act would seal their doom. His hour was not yet come, but, when they had lifted up the Son of man, too late would they know that He was what He said, and that His testimony of and from the Father was the truth.

That He was the light and His witness true, is the subject to ver. 21. He now exposes, not their ignorance (ver. 19), but their origin and certain destiny, apart from faith in Him. Clearly evidenced by their hardened hatred of Himself, they were from beneath. This the world was; and they were of it. He was not of it, but from above, although he testified in grace to the world what He had heard from the Father. Cleaving to their Jewish thoughts and earthly privileges, they would die in their sins—their terrible and only heritage under law. Where He went they could not come.

The heart of Jesus does not repress the joy which the Father's presence and favour gave Him; and many, touched by it, believe on Him. Plainly He enjoyed that which law could never give; nor was it any product of earthly privilege. He declared the "truth." It was the revelation of the Father, not merely what was true; and abiding in His word, they should be truly His disciples, and know the truth, and be set free.

But freedom they boasted of, as well as of title in the flesh to earthly promises. Vain boast! They were bondmen to sin, and in consequence had forfeited the promises, and would not remain in the house for ever.

The Son, however, could set them free in abiding liberty, but His word had no entrance into them. They were Abraham's fleshly seed,

but not Abraham's children; for they were would-be murderers of Him who revealed the truth which He had heard from God, even what He had seen with His Father.

In fact, He had already shown their ignorance, and more, that they were beneath and of the world; but now He traces their character to its fountain-head. Their moral state was derived neither from Abraham nor God; and their deeds of blood were such as they had seen with another who *was* their father. They had not the faith of Abraham, nor love towards Him who came from God. The devil was their father. He was a murderer and a liar, and its father; and his lusts they desired to do. He stood not in the truth, neither is it in him; for the truth is that which Jesus speaks, revealing the Father. But this, blinded by prejudice and pride, they could not hear, though quite without excuse. They were not of God,—solemn but righteous sentence.

Incensed beyond measure, in impotent anger they rail upon Jesus, dishonouring Him with their words. Called "a Samaritan," He heeds not the taunt; but a demon He had not, for He honoured His Father.

Apart from violence, they could go no further in outrageous insult, and are silenced by the calm and solemn dignity of His words. The Saviour's heart expands immediately with grace, of which He was the divine and personal ex-

pression—full of grace and truth. To keep His word is in no wise to see death unto eternity! How vast and precious a blessing! How needed by the perishing soul of man! Is there not a chord in their heart which shall respond to it? Nay, a response only of reiterated, insistent insult. Had not Abraham and the prophets seen death? What was He to guarantee a soul against it?

To their minds this was an unanswerable argument. But reasoning never attains to the truth of God. Jesus did not assume this power to glorify Himself; He exercised it, and all else, in dependence upon His Father who glorified Him. "He is our God," said they, but yet knew Him not; Jesus knew and obeyed Him.

Oh! that they had the heart of Abraham, who anticipated with joy the day of Jesus' glory. The Lord yearned over them in grace; but only so as to occasion their wrath to burst all bounds. If Abraham looked forward to His day, He must pretend to have seen Abraham, so they reasoned. But He was not yet fifty years old! Jesus solemnly replies, "Before Abraham was, I am"—a divine fact overthrowing human reasoning.

They had said, He was a Samaritan and had a demon: they were liars. Now they fill up the other trait that proves their parentage, and take up stones to cast at Him. They would be murderers as well of Him who was eternal. But Jesus avoids them and passes out of the

Temple. It was their house, and there they established law, and bring in a sinner to be judged by it, while they reject and drive out Him who was the light. But the Father's house was quite another; there the Son abides, and fills its heavenly courts with light, setting poor souls free to enjoy it, where death has no place, but where He is, in whom God's saints ever exulted, and will do so throughout eternity.

Hints on Ezekiel.

THE PARABLE OF THE EAGLES—Chap. xvii.

WE have here again a most vivid allegorical description of what was transpiring at Jerusalem. There can be little difficulty in seeing to what it all refers, for not only is the parable itself one of the plainest when compared with the history as given in Kings and Chronicles, as well as the other parts of the prophetic scriptures, but the explanation of the parable is appended in the chapter before us.

For the sake of simplicity, we may point out a threefold division of the chapter—(1) the parable (vers. 1-10); (2) the interpretation (vers. 11-21); (3) an allegorical foreshadowing of future restoration (vers. 22-24).

The great eagle of verse 3 refers to the power of Babylon. Other scriptures use the same figure for this first of the great Gentile powers, to whom, for their sins, Israel was subjected (see Deut. xxviii. 49; Jer. xlviii. 40, xlix. 22; Dan. vii. 4; Hab. i. 8).

The highest branch of the cedar of Lebanon was Jehoiachin, king of Judah, who was carried away captive to Babylon, the city renowned for its opulence and commercial activity—"a land of traffic . . . a city of merchants" (see Isa. xiii. 19, xliii. 14).

The other great eagle in verse 7 is Egypt, with which Zedekiah, king of Judah, intrigued, in order to free himself from the Babylonian dominion (Jer. xxxvii.); but this artifice on his part did not prosper (2 Kings xxiv.; 2 Chron. xxxvi.). The vine, we may remember, is the well-known figure of Israel.

The interpretation that follows (vers. 11-21) makes it clear that the above is the true solution to the riddle put forth by the prophet. For a brief moment after the removal of Jehoiachin to Babylon did God put Judah to a final test. Had Zedekiah respected the oath which he had sworn to Nebuchadnezzar, there might still have remained a feeble flickering of David's lamp at Jerusalem. But all was hopelessly departed from God. On two grounds was Zedekiah doomed to captivity—he had done evil in the sight of the Lord, and had refused to humble himself before

Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord ; but, besides this, he had despised the oath which he had sworn in the name of the Lord (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12, 13 ; Ezek. xvii. 18). There was less conscience found amongst the people of God than even amongst the Gentiles, for Zedekiah, and not Nebuchadnezzar, broke the solemn covenant of God. The net of governmental judgment was spread, and Zedekiah was taken in Jehovah's snare. But as always in the prophetic word, future restoration is in view (vers. 22-24). A tender twig will yet be planted by Jehovah's own hand "in the mountain of the height of Israel" ; under His fostering care shall it be made to flourish, so that all the trees of the field (that is, the powers of the earth) shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish : I the Lord have spoken, and have done it " (ver. 24).

Blessed are those who believe His word before the day of its accomplishment.

THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE.

(Chap. xviii.)

The moral instruction of this chapter cannot be too earnestly applied, and yet is it of the utmost importance to remember that the government of Israel upon the earth is the subject.

Individual responsibility is here insisted upon. The unrepentant people were murmuring against the fancied injustice of God's dealings. The proverb was in common use, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." To a certain extent this was the case (see Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7), but now, at the time of the Babylonian captivity, a change in the principle of God's dealings was to take place. If a man were just, and lived in accordance with God's holy and righteous claims, "he shall surely live, saith the Lord God" (vers. 5-9).

But, on the other hand, if the son of this just father were to trample God's laws under his feet, "he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon him" (vers. 10-13).

Again, the case is supposed of a son who, beholding the evil life of his father, considers the matter seriously, and turns his own feet into the way of righteousness, "he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live" (vers. 14-18).

The principle, then, is plainly established, spite of Israel's murmurings, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," and it only (vers. 19, 20).

Next, two opposite cases are supposed, that of a wicked man turning from his sin, and that of the righteous turning from his righteousness. The former should live, the latter should die (vers. 21-24).

Could they with any justice complain that

Jehovah's ways were unjust? By no means. "Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" What patient grace is here shown! Jehovah reasoning with His rebellious and murmuring people! It was a final, but, alas! unheeded appeal on His part to their consciences, each one individually. Judgment was at hand: "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (vers. 25-32).

It is most interesting to compare ver. 31 with chap. xxxvi. 26. In the passage now before us we find a solemn call to repentance, "make you a new heart," &c., whereas in chap. xxxvi. it is Jehovah Himself who will *give* a new heart to His repentant people in a yet future day. *Here* they were about to be driven from their land, *there* they should be restored to it.

It is most important to remember that all has to do with God's governmental dealings with His earthly people Israel. The subject is not that of eternal salvation, forgiveness, and life as presented in the gospel. No one can ever be saved for heaven on the ground of works. The work of Christ alone opens those portals of

glory for any ; and, thank God ! it opens them wide for *all* who believe.

When it says, "the *soul* that sinneth it shall die," we are not to understand the word in its spiritual sense, but rather as it is often used to imply the person, *e.g.*, we speak of a town containing so many *souls*, meaning *inhabitants*. In the spiritual sense the soul *never* dies.



Brief Notes on the Seven Churches.

PERGAMOS.

THE state of things in this Church is very different to that which has just occupied us in Smyrna. Here no mention is made of tribulation or poverty : on the contrary, the Church was "dwelling" where Satan's throne is. So long as there was pressure and trial from outside, it only had the effect of purifying and detaching from the world ; but now where this has ceased, the Church has settled down into the world and dwells where Satan rules. To accept honour and position from the world, as Lot did, is a very different thing from going through the world as a pilgrim and a stranger, like Abraham, passing on in the energy of faith to the heavenly rest above. Yet the special

characteristic of the Church is that she is united to a heavenly Christ, and all her hopes and aspirations are where He has gone. Alas! this is easily forgotten, present things exercise a power over the soul, and the people of God get caught in the world in some way or other.

Another thing here was the allowance of evil doctrine. Bad doctrine is even more subtle and dangerous than bad practice, and its effects are more far-reaching. If the supply of water to one dwelling in a city becomes tainted, the result may be serious; but how much more so if the supply should become vitiated in its very source and spring.

There were those who held the doctrine (it does not say they taught it, possibly they did, but they held it) of Balaam. Balak hired the false prophet to curse the people of God, but this only brought out what the people were in God's thoughts, and Satan's efforts were turned into a blessing. If Balaam could not succeed in this way, he did so only too well by seduction. It was Balaam who suggested to Balak to cast a snare before the children of Israel, for "through the counsel of Balaam" the people were caused to "commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor" (Num. xxxi. 16). Caught in this snare, they fall into the ways of the world both in religious and moral evil. There were also amongst them those who held the doctrine

of the Nicolaitanes—very different this to the Church at Ephesus, where they hated even the “deeds” of the Nicolaitanes. Whatever this doctrine may have been, whether it was abuse of free grace (as some have thought) or not, we know that it was hateful to Christ.

The aspect in which the Lord is presented to this Church is more distinctly judicial than either of the preceding ones; it is as “He which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” Here it is in connection with judgment in the Church, and in chap. xix. 15 we have the same symbol in connection with the judgment of the world. Historically, the state of things here indicated was that which ensued after the cessation of the persecution which took place under the heathen emperors, when the Church was applauded and caressed by the world, leading to increasing darkness and evil of every kind.

It has been remarked by writers on Church history that it would be a mistake to suppose that, when corruptions and errors came into the early Church, individual voices were not raised against them. They were, such voices were plainly heard, but they were lost and drowned in the general decline and darkness that was coming in; the world, in one shape or another, was swamping everything in the Church. Nevertheless the Lord recognises what He can that is good—the fruit of His own grace indeed—as He always does. They held fast His name and

had not denied His faith. Thus it was no small mercy that in spite of all the efforts of Satan in raising up such men as Arius, Nestorius, and many others about this very period, and in the face of abounding corruption and evil, the great fundamental truths as to the Person of Christ as very God and very man, two natures united in one Person, were strongly asserted and maintained.

God in His infinite grace overruled in such a way, and raised up witnesses for the truth, so that these great cardinal truths should remain, however deep the darkness which clouded and hid from view the superstructure of the Christian faith.

“Repent,” He says to this Church also, “or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” He does not say, I will fight against *thee*, but against *them*; for, however He may chasten, those whom He cuts off are not His own, but the evildoers.

The promise to the overcomer here is particularly precious and in keeping with the state of the Church. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna:” the manna was a type of Christ, the true bread come down from heaven to be fed upon by faith. Moreover Moses was commanded to “take a pot, and put an omer of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord,” so it was laid up “before the

testimony." Thus the hidden manna typified Christ; but Christ, we may say, under the immediate eye of God, as understood and appreciated by Him. The One over whom, at His baptism, when taking His place in infinite grace amongst the repentant remnant of His people, the heavens could open as a worthy object, and the Father's voice could own as "My beloved Son."

What a reward it is, then, to the overcomer here to eat of the hidden manna—to have communion with the Father, with God Himself in *His* thoughts about His beloved Son! If the world was swamping everything in the Church, is it not a blessed reward for the faithful ones to be permitted to enter into God's thoughts, His appreciation of Christ, in the secrecy of communion with Him outside the world?

Then there was another individual mark of approval. He would give a white stone, with a new name inscribed which no one knows but he who receives it. Christ Himself, as we see Him revealed in warrior-judgment in chap. xix., has a "name written that no man knew but Himself." Being the Infinite, none could comprehend His Being: but here in chap. ii., He who has authority to give, *gives* in His sovereign grace a new name unknown to any but the one who receives it. There are many joys and privileges which Christians have in common, in fellowship with one another; but there is also

that which is personal between the soul and Christ, and here it is that personal, individual reward which is peculiar to him who receives it.

THYATIRA.

The address to Thyatira, which is the fourth of the seven churches, indicates a still darker and more corrupt state of things than that which has occupied us hitherto. The character in which the Lord is presented is as “the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass.” Nothing escapes Him, He sees, discerns, and judges unsparingly all that is passing in the Church. At the same time He recognises all He can that is good, and these were works, love, faith, service, and patience; and the last works were more than the first. The very darkness and corruption around made the devotedness to Him all the more precious where it was found.

“No Man Likeminded.”

(TIMOTHY—Paul’s son in the faith.)

NOTHING more touching can perhaps be found in the epistolary part of the New Testament than the communications of the aged apostle Paul to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith; and we desire to

suggest a few thoughts concerning the more personal of these exhortations, interspersed as they are amongst the important and abiding principles of truth which the two epistles to Timothy contain.

No stronger proof of Paul's confidence could have been given than that Timothy should be left at Ephesus, especially that he might watch over the *doctrines* taught, and not merely order, or conduct, like Titus; besides this we find proofs of deepest attachment between the two men.

Associated with the apostle in the salutations in several of the epistles (such as 2 Corinthians and Colossians) it, may specially be noticed that, in saluting the Philippians, Paul couples Timothy with himself as "servants of Jesus Christ"; and (chap. ii.) speaks of his urgent desire to send him to them, in the striking words—"having no man like-minded, who will naturally (genuinely) care for your state." Thus, he who had served with the apostle, as a son with a father, is commended for his faithfulness; and it is interesting to notice how the Holy Spirit dwells on the word "faithful" in both the epistles. Eight times we find it in our English Bibles, and several times more the same word in the original is translated by other words.

To the Corinthians (1 Cor. iv. 17) Paul speaks of having sent Timotheus to them, "who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord; who shall

bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ." Amidst the declension so deeply felt and mourned over in the second epistle, this faithful fellow-servant was a solace and joy to the aged apostle beyond all others; and doubtless he entered into the truth revealed through Paul as none other in that day did.

The charge mentioned so solemnly (1 Tim. v. 18), relating no doubt to the *third* and *fifth* verses, indicates that the sacred commission was not taken up by Timothy of his own accord only, nor even by Paul's direction; but that he had been pointed out by prophecies beforehand, which were doubtless a means of strength to him when in the conflict.

Note again, that (chap. iii. 14) "hoping to come unto thee shortly," gives occasion to the instruction as to "how thou oughtest to conduct thyself in the house of God," &c., and (chap. iv.) "the gift that is in thee," is not to be neglected, but having been conferred so markedly, by laying on of hands and prophecy, must be nurtured.

Then (chap. v. 21) there is a solemn charge from the apostle as to impartiality in the execution of his commission, which is combined with a thoughtful consideration for his physical weakness; and the injunction to take a little wine for his stomach's sake, is a proof in itself of the temperate habits of this faithful servant, and how carefully he refrained from the least indulgence

that would merely contribute to his personal comfort and pleasure.

From chapter vi. 12 we learn that he had confessed a good confession before many witnesses; and how emphatic is the charge to "keep the commandment without spot, unrebukeable"; this first epistle closing with an exhortation of even more marked character: "O Timothy, keep that *deposit* which is committed to thy trust" (chap. vi. 20, R.V.). This word *deposit*, translated in our version "good thing," is only found in three places—here, and in 2 Timothy i. 12, 14. Surely the Holy Spirit does not use a special word thus, without some particular and sufficient reason; and we do not doubt that "*the deposit*" in these verses has a special signification.

In contrast to the charge—the gift—the commandment—the faith—used in other parts of these two letters so variously, may it not be that the good thing here spoken of is the truth as a whole; and the truth of the mystery—Christ and the Church—more particularly.

No man of that day entered into this special revelation to Paul as did his beloved Timothy. To most others, as to Peter, it was among the "things hard to be understood;" but with this likeminded servant and confidant, the sound and sanctifying truths concerning the assembly were shared. As another has said, "How dear to the apostle's heart is the communion and

faithfulness of these precious souls!" When others had turned away and forsaken him, doubly valuable is the devotion of his genuine son, of whose tears he is not unmindful, and whose faith was unfeigned. The aged servant about to resign his charge so faithfully kept, looks around for a likeminded servant, and finds him in Timothy—a young man evidently of a retiring disposition, inclined to shrink from the *difficulties and trials that the ardent nature of Paul had met only to surmount.* The aged father in Christ seeks by every godly means to encourage the timid and tearful (2 Tim. i. 4) young servant. How grateful to the aged warrior, who had fought his good fight, to have this one, amongst so many who had turned away, to carry on, if less boldly, the defence of the truth.

He does not doubt that faithful men can be found, but in what soul-stirring, inspiring words, does he call upon his son, "O Timothy, keep the entrusted deposit" (R.V. margin and New Trans.), avoiding "profane and vain babblings;" and again, "Keep, by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us, that good deposit entrusted" (2 Tim. i. 14).

How important for us to-day to ponder these searching words, and to seek grace to know *the truth* from such a Divine standpoint. In this day, when the need of man is the "*be all and end all*" of current Christianity, may we learn something of the true character of the good

thing—the deposit—the treasure of Divine truth and riches respecting Christ and the Church, which the beloved apostle and his faithful son enjoyed in their true character and power.

T. R.

A Few Remarks on Luke x. 38-42.

HOW little, beloved brethren, do we enter into the Word of God! In these busy days it is well to remind one another of meditation in it. We complain of the want of growth in the saints; but if you stint yourself in your sustenance, how can you expect growth? We are like children playing with farthings, who think they are sovereigns. Our time is occupied with other things.

Some of us are travel-stained and weather-beaten, and others entering somewhat freshly on the path; but if any of us look back, can we not say that we did not know when He first touched us—where He would lead us. There is no *way to Christ*, Christ is the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. There is no distance between the sinner and Christ—He who, as we sometimes say, could lay His hand on the leper, and not be defiled, but remain the spotless, stainless Son of God.

We see Him here with one sitting at His feet, and we shall find her again at His feet in other

places. There may be "many things" that engage us, the Lord's interests too, but they will all be taken away. And we shall not regret it. But one thing, His word, will not be taken away. "One thing is needful." Martha was caring *about* the Lord.

Did Mary know, as she sat at His feet, where He would lead His follower? Let us look at the eleventh of John, verse 32—"Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." She has deepened in acquaintance with Him. But Christ had not come to apply a remedy. Death was there, and death is beyond all remedies. And it was the state of man. God never mends anything, He leaves it to man to mend things. He will not mend this poor earth, He will have new heavens and a new earth. And it is nothing to Him—He can speak a world into existence. He entered into their sorrow—He wept; but it was at more than that, it was at the universal pall spread over everything.

In the twelfth of John we see her again at His feet, with the precious ointment. She is silent, but He speaks for her—"Against the day of My burying hath she kept this."

May we so enter into His word, that when we are together the ointment may be there.

Correspondence.

Harwich.—A correspondent sends us the following clipping from the "War Cry":—"Saul was truly converted; he was 'turned into another man.' 'God gave him another heart' (1 Sam. x. 6-9); yet he backslid (1 Sam. xv. 11). God withdrew from him His favour (ver. 23)," &c. &c.

WHATEVER we may think of the work and methods of the Salvation Army, no one would look to them for clear exposition of Scripture, or sound interpretations of the truth. But they are not the only ones who teach that a truly converted person may after all be lost. It is the common doctrine of Wesleyanism, but very far indeed from the truth of the gospel.

The case of Saul (1 Sam. x. 6), to which you refer, has often perplexed anxious souls. But no one can rightly argue from this verse that Saul was a converted man; nor from 1 Sam. xv. 23, that after conversion God withdrew from him His favour.

The Spirit came upon him as a prophet; but this in no wise proves that he was converted. At conversion a man is *born* of the Spirit, and then *indwelt* by the Spirit. But God may use a wicked man like Balaam as His mouthpiece (Num. xxiv. 2); and Saul was thus used, not only at the beginning of his career, but even after God had rejected him as king (1 Sam. xix. 23). We read of many who will say in a

coming day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you," &c. (Matt. vii. 21-24). Mark it does not say, "I knew you once," but "I *never* knew you."

One clear verse of Scripture is better than all man's reasonings: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (John x. 28).

Many years ago when the blessed emancipating truth of the gospel was recovered by God's grace for the present generation, a dear and pious saint of God was groaning out his misery, still under the bondage of the law, and ignorant of the liberty of grace. He had been saying that God had withdrawn the shining of His countenance from him. The one who had been the chief instrument in God's hands of this recovery of truth replied, "God never withdraws the shining of His countenance from a true believer, for all believers are in Christ, and God cannot withdraw the light of His countenance from Christ." "Ah," replied the other, "but I turn my back upon Him." "Then," came the quick rejoinder, "God will shine upon your back." Yes, He has made us accepted in His beloved Son (Eph. i. 6), and believers stand always in His favour (Rom. v. 2).

The doctrine of "falling away" denies the

Word of God, dishonours the work of Christ, and destroys the true character of the gospel.

But it remains ever true that the believer is called upon to walk consistently with the grace that has so richly blessed him. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Col. ii. 6). ED.

Bristol.—"Did God die?" and other papers.

While there is much that is true and good in the papers you have marked, yet I feel that the ground is too holy for controversy.

The person of Christ is inscrutable—"no man knoweth the Son but the Father;" and while it is of the very essence of the Christian faith to hold firmly that in that blessed Person both God and man are found united, though never confounded, yet we must beware of endeavouring to analyse, dissect, and separate. He is the perfect and inexhaustible object of worship and adoration, not the subject for speculation and reasoning.

We learn a much-needed lesson from the service of the sons of Kohath in Numbers iv., and one which has been ignored by those who in recent years have lightly and flippantly discussed this holy mystery.

In the journeyings of the children of Israel through the wilderness it fell to the lot of the sons of Kohath to minister about the "most holy things" of the sanctuary. They had to

bear the ark and the vessels of the tabernacle. Now all in the tabernacle typified our blessed Lord in some way or other—a deeply interesting study, too long for this reply to your question.

But we are told that the sons of Kohath were not to “*touch* any holy thing, lest they die” (ver. 15). Now, inasmuch as they were the appointed carriers of these holy things, it looked almost like an impossibility that they should not touch them. But God, who even in the type took care of the blessed Person of the Lord, entrusted to Aaron and his sons the task of taking down the covering vail, and of covering the ark and all the vessels of the sanctuary and of putting in the staves. In other words, it is in their priestly character as worshippers that the people of God should handle these holy things.

Furthermore, it is said that they were not to go in and *see* when the holy things were covered, “lest they die.” Now on two occasions in the after-history of the people of Israel we find these plain commandments of the Lord ignored. The men of Bethshemesh were smitten “*because they had looked* into the ark of the Lord” (1 Sam. vi. 19). Is the sin any less grievous in the sight of the Lord because the dispensation is that of grace and not of law? Surely not.

Again, we find the anger of the Lord kindled against Uzzah for putting forth his hand to touch the ark, and as he no doubt thought to protect it (2 Sam. vi. 7). Now it is quite possible that the

writer of the articles in question may have thought that he was defending the Lord's person against the attacks of others, but I feel that he has fallen into the same snare, which I deeply regret.

And this has led him to a very serious error, as I believe, in separating entirely the deity of Christ from the work of atonement.

It amounts to this, that the atoning work of the cross was an exclusively *human* work. The Man who performed it may have been perfect, but according to the author of these articles the work was human and not divine.

Scripture says that Christ "offered Himself." Who dare say that there was nothing but the manhood of Christ in this? Again Scripture says, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 9, 10). Who would venture to exclude His deity from those verses? May God deliver His people from the entanglement of these fleshly reasonings!

In conclusion I would say that I have invariably found utter deadness of conscience as to all this sort of rationalism amongst those who have fallen under its power.

"Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,
That every knee to Thee should bow."

ED.

Hints on Ezekiel.

THE LIONESS AND HER WHELPS.—Chap. xix.

THIS chapter concludes the section we have been considering (chaps. viii.-xix.), applying to the princes of Israel what in the previous chapter (xviii.) had been urged upon the people as a whole.

It is a lamentation for the *princes* of Israel, whose responsibility as the leaders of the people was great. It is ever a serious thing for oneself to turn aside from the Lord, dishonouring, too, to Him ; but how sad to think of the evil influence upon others of a careless and disobedient walk.

The lamentation is given in the form of an allegory, the understanding of which should have presented no difficulty, for the circumstances to which it referred had only just transpired. The young lion of verse 3 was Jehoahaz, king of Judah, also called Shallum. He was the son of Josiah, one of Judah's good kings, who did what was right in the sight of the Lord. But the righteousness of the father did not avail for the son, who was brought bound with chains to the land of Egypt, where he died (verses 3, 4).

The second young lion (verses 5-9) was

Jehoiakim, who, at the very time that Ezekiel was prophesying, was in captivity in Babylon.

How changed was everything in Israel (verses 10-14) from the days when Jehovah had brought her as a vine out of Egypt, and had planted her as His pleasant plant (see Ps. lxxx.; Isa. v.). Then, indeed, she *was* "fruitful, and full of branches," but now her fruit was dried up by the east wind of Jehovah's chastisement. She was cast out of the fruitful hill of Zion, and planted in the wilderness of Chaldea. Her last king, Zedekiah, was about to be carried away to Babylon, as Jehoiachin had been before him, and the long dreary period of desolation was about to commence. "For the children shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince. . . . Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God," &c. (Hos. iii. 4, 5).

Six hundred years from the time of Zedekiah's fall, Jehovah's king, the true David, was presented to Israel in fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zech. ix. 9). But Israel would not have Him. "Not this man, but Barabbas," was their cry. "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face" (Hos. v. 15).

Outlines of the Gospel of John.

8. THE SON OF GOD, LIGHT FOR THE BLIND.

(Chap. ix.)

LAW and bondage to sin contrasted with the freedom given by the Son in the Father's house is what comes into view in chapter viii. In chapter ix. the soul receiving sight is introduced already to the Son of God ; but this is and must be outside of law and its administration. In the former chapter all was traced to its origin and result ; here the course and explanation of all that occurs meanwhile are set forth.

How deep and clear an insight is here given us into the causes and reasons of the mysterious dealings of God in providence ! A man born blind, was it because of sin in himself or in others ? Nay, this is a thought formed in the mind which law governs, according to man's responsibility, not the revelation of the mind of God. If the light is in the world the works of God who is it must be in grace and sovereign goodness, not law ; and all the permitted ruin of the scene becomes an occasion for the revelation of Him-

self. But the night was coming quickly on, when bereft of light, the world would be left immediately to the due result of man's ways and principles. Not man's work then, but the judgment of it; meanwhile the works of God were done by the One He had sent in manhood.

But the divine character of these works is manifested in connection with obedience to the word of the Sent One — a faith that penetrates beyond the external things, perceiving the light although it was revealed in flesh. Jesus puts mud as ointment on the eyes of the blind man, and says to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." He obeys, washes, and comes seeing.

The Spirit of God gives the interpretation of the word Siloam, affording thus the key to the teaching of this chapter. It means "Sent," and shows that light in us, the capacity to see spiritually, is received when faith connects the word with Jesus as the Sent One of the Father. Faith and obedience to the word are supposed in the case of the blind man, but no light until washed in the waters of Siloam. Then only could he see and believe in, so as to worship, the Son of God.

It is an important principle that light increases in the measure of faithfulness to what we already have. Blindly the man had believed and obeyed the word of Jesus, and received sight, knowing Him only as Source of the grace which had

healed him. Called upon by the neighbours who knew him to give an account of the sign which had taken place in him, he attributes it solely to Jesus and His word. But Jesus had done this on the Sabbath, showing clearly that the law which required rest on that day, and its teachers, were precluded from any share in the honour of the work. It was then plainly the work of God, which law most certainly could not forbid, nor limit.

Morally blinded as the Pharisees were, they reasoned on the contrary that however good the work, the man who did it could not be of God, for he did not keep the Sabbath day. But he whose eyes were opened saw with God, and said, "He is a prophet."

How soon the knowledge of Jesus sets an impassable gulf between the believer and the world! It is the distance between grace and law. But the breach rapidly widens. Left alone, deserted even by his parents for fear of the Jews, he is called to answer a second time. The glory of the work must be given to God, say they—for that it was divine and glorious could not be denied—"but we know that this man is sinful."

The other gospels insist that it is right to do good on the Sabbath day, and that He, the Son of man, was Lord of the Sabbath, for the Sabbath was made for man. But in John it is a question of God's work, and He is not bound


by regulations which apply to man. Grace is superior to law. Faithful to the light already given him, the man who had been blind recognises this, as the light increasingly bursts in upon his soul. He traces all to and from God. God does not hear sinners, but only those who fear Him. Never before had any man done such a divine work. He was certainly "of God." Reasoning from pride and prejudice, the Pharisees concluded that He was sinful and His origin suspicious. The beggar argued from undeniable facts that He was no sinner, but of God.

The light of which this poor man became the vessel compels the Pharisees to appear in their true character—not as differing in opinion, but as in deadly opposition. Jesus had said that this man's blindness was not occasioned by sin. The Pharisees assert that he was wholly born in sins, and they cast him out of the synagogue.

He is now outside the privileges of law and of religion for the earth, and the light had led him on to find in Jesus the Source of divine grace. As yet, however, he has known Jesus only in what he has received from Him. The light will now reveal what Jesus is in Himself. Finding him when cast out, Jesus says to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him?" he asks. Jesus replies, "Thou hast both seen Him, and He that speaks with thee is He." And he said, "Lord, I believe;" and he worshipped Him.

Jesus had come into this world to be the light of it, so that those who were conscious of their spiritual blindness might see through grace ; and, on the other hand, that those who, in their self-sufficiency, opposed law to grace and used its authority to assert themselves, might be at last exposed to its judgment and condemnation. If they were blind, the light had come, and sin would not be imputed to them. Pretending to see as teachers and administrators of the law, their sin was bound upon them by the principle of law itself.

This completes the characterising conditions of Christian blessing, to be realised and enjoyed in the day of the Spirit's presence, Jesus being glorified, viz., the power of life and testimony on earth ; made free for the Father's house, though not yet there ; but already seeing by faith and having intercourse with the Son of God.



Recollections of Address on Luke vii. 36=50.

IT is evident, beloved brethren, and it has been specially before us this morning, that our purpose in coming here is to remember the Lord, and that not so much in what He does or has done for us, though many and great are

His varied services to our souls, but Himself—
“This do in remembrance of Me.”

We cannot cross the threshold of this room without thinking of His services towards us. “We are saved by His life;” “Because I live, ye shall live also.” We little apprehend the depth of His present interest in us. The maturity of Christianity is not shown by our being able to do without Him, but as we go on we are more consciously dependent on Him. We have not a stock we can draw from, but our resources are all in Him.

Our histories have been closed by the cross, and this scene has been closed by the cross for us. We learn it here that the scene is closed. The more we know our own ruin, the more we enter into what Christ is. The love, the blessedness, and the grace of the Lord Jesus have found a theatre in the wants, the misery, and the wretchedness of men.

“If such the sweetness of the stream,
What must the Fountain be?”

In this chapter we have the display of His divine power. He heals the centurion's servant, and then He passes on to the coffin which carried the heart of the poor widow and all that she had. In the 21st verse we have the effects of Satan's power. Sickness, and death, and Satan's power give way to Him. When He appears at the end, His enemies will be destroyed

by His brightness. As in the days of old, His enemies will be scattered, and those that hate Him will flee before Him.

Some have not apprehended what man really is, and let me say that short views of sin and short views of Christ go together. And the contrary is true, a defective view of Christ will make a man deficient in his views about sin. This Pharisee says, "This man, if he were a prophet"—he doubts even if He were a prophet, much less the Son of God.

The woman did not know much, she did not know her sins were forgiven. She may or may not have been cognisant of what had passed before, as recorded in the former part of the Gospel. But she knew love, and she appreciated the Lord. And see how He appreciates her. Her tears, her love, her silence, are all noted by Him. And it is not necessary that we should be always *talking* to the Lord. He that made the heart knows it. He takes us in. There is not a groan nor a sigh that He cannot interpret. And, beloved, we may come to this some day, that the Lord will be the only Person that will appreciate us.

The love of this woman was not the cause, but the effect of her being forgiven. When there are needs in the soul, Christ comes in to fill them. Why is not the heart entrusted to Him without any reserve?

A Letter on Admittance to the Lord's Table.

THE question is, as to reception of saints to partake of the table of the Lord with us, whether any can be admitted who are not formally and regularly amongst us. It is not whether we exclude persons unsound in faith or ungodly in practice; not whether we, deliberately walking with those who are unsound or ungodly, are not in the same guilt—not clear in the matter. The first is unquestionable; the last, brethren have insisted on, and I among them, at very painful cost to ourselves. This is, to me, all clear and plain from Scripture. There may be subtle pleas to get evil allowed, but we have always been firm, and God I believe has fully owned it.

The question is not that; but suppose a person known to be godly and sound in faith, who has not left some ecclesiastical system—nay, thinks Scripture favours an ordained ministry, but is glad when the occasion occurs—suppose we alone are in the place, or he is not in connection with any other body in the place, staying with a brother, or the like; is he to be excluded because he is of some system as to which his

conscience is not enlightened—nay, which he may think more right? He is a godly member of the body, known to be such. Is he to be shut out? If so, the degree of light is title to communion, and the unity of the body is denied by the assembly which refused him. The principle of meeting as members of Christ walking in godliness is given up, *agreement* with us is made the rule, and the assembly becomes a sect with its members like any other. They meet on their principles, Baptist or other—you on yours; and if they do not belong to you formally as such, you do not let them in. The principle of brethren's meetings is gone, and another sect is made, say with more light, and that is all. It may give more trouble, require more care to treat every case on its merits, on the principle of the unity of all Christ's members, than to say, "You do not belong to us, you cannot come." But the whole principle of meeting is gone. The path is not of God.

I have heard, and I partly believe it, for I have heard some rash and violent people say it elsewhere, that the various sectarian celebrations of the Supper are tables of devils. But this proves only the unbrokenness and ignorance of him who says it. The heathen altars are called tables of devils because, and expressly because, what they offered, they offered (according to Deut. xxxii. 17) to devils and not to God; and to call Christian assemblies by profession,

ignorant it may be of ecclesiastical truth, and hence meeting wrongly, tables of devils, is monstrous nonsense, and shows the bad taste of him who so talks. No sober man, no honest man, can deny that Scripture means something totally different.

I have heard—I do not know whether it be true—that it has been said that the brethren in England act on this ground. If this has been said, it is simply and totally false. There have been new gatherings formed during my absence in America, which I have never visited, but the older ones, long walking as brethren, I have known from the beginning have *always* received known Christians, and everywhere I have no doubt the newer ones too, and so in every country. I have known individuals take up the thought, one at any rate at Toronto, but the assembly always received true Christians; three broke bread in this way the last Lord's Day I was in London. There cannot be too much care as to holiness and truth; the Spirit is the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Truth. But ignorance of ecclesiastical truth is not a ground of excommunication, where the conscience and the walk is undefiled.

If a person came and made it a condition to be allowed to go to both, he would not come in simplicity in the unity of the body. I know it to be evil, and cannot *allow* it, and he has no right to impose any conditions on the Church of

God. It must exercise discipline as cases arise according to the Word. Nor indeed do I think a person going regularly from one to another systematically can be honest in going to either ; he is setting up to be superior to both, and condescending to each. That is not, *in that act*, a pure heart.

May the Lord guide you. Remember you are acting as representing the whole Church of God, and if you depart from a right path as to the principle of meeting, separating yourselves from it is to be a local sect on your own principles. In all that concerns faithfulness, God is my witness, I seek no looseness, but Satan is busy to lead us on one side or the other, to destroy the largeness of the unity of the body, or to make it mere looseness in practice and doctrine. We must not fall into one error in avoiding the other. Reception of all true saints is what gives its force to the exclusion of those walking loosely. If I exclude all walking godlily as well, who do not follow with us, it loses its force, for those who are godly are shut out too—there is membership of brethren.

Membership of an assembly is unknown to Scripture. It is members of Christ's body. If people must be all of you, it is practically membership of your body. The Lord keep us from it. That is simply dissenting ground.—
Ever, beloved brother, affectionately yours,

J. N. D.

Brief Notes on the Seven Churches.

THYATIRA.

THERE were those who were truly devoted and earnest even in the darkness of the Middle Ages. "But," He says, "I have against thee that thou sufferest that woman, Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." The best copies leave out the words at the beginning of verse 20, "a few things," for it was not something trivial He had against them, but an exceedingly solemn state. It was not here, as in the Church at Pergamos, those who held the doctrine of Balaam, laying a snare for the people of God; but it was Jezebel—a woman assuming to be a prophetess, to have the oracles of God. The figure used, that of a woman, indicates a settled system—it was a system of seduction of the servants of God. This seduction took the form of complicity with the world on the one hand, and religious corruption and idolatry on the other. Jezebel was characterised by avarice and love of worldly gain as well as religious iniquity. She it was

who urged on Ahab to idolatry ; she was also the bitter persecutor of the true servants of God. She it was who slew the prophets of the Lord, and of whom it is written, " That I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the Lord, at the hand of Jezebel."

This state of the Church was a decided advance in evil. Historically we see it in the system which we know as Romanism, which grew to such proportions and consolidated its power in the Middle Ages. The roots of the evil came out very early in the Church, the state described in Pergamos prepared the way for it ; but it was not till about the ninth or tenth century that it was really consolidated into a powerfully organised system. Not only was Jezebel corrupt herself, but she was a source and parent of corruption. These were " her children," the offspring and perpetuation of her evil ways. God bore with long patience, He gave space for repentance ; but when the light of the Reformation shone forth, and Rome definitely rejected it, and again asserted her false doctrines in a systematic manner, as she did at the Council of Trent (1545-1563), she became as apostate as any professedly Christian system could become, and there remained nothing but judgment.

Nevertheless, even in the darkness of the Middle Ages, there were those whom God preserved as a witness for Himself. The professing

Church, as such, had gone hopelessly into the world and got under the power of Jezebel; and here the Lord distinguishes a remnant: "But unto you I say, the rest (or remnant) in Thyatira." The "and unto" is left out by the best translators; for the Lord here formally distinguishes this remnant of faithful ones, and addresses them—they had not known this doctrine or the depths of Satan—and He lays upon them no other burden than that which they had,—“Hold fast till I come.” It is not recovery of the Church as a whole which is to be looked for here, but the Lord sets apart this remnant in the Church and the promise of His coming as the hope is set before them. And this is peculiarly in place here, because nothing is more powerful to deliver from the world than the hope of His coming.

If Jezebel sought to rule and persecute the true saints of God, the Lord promises to the overcomer here identification with Himself in the place He will take, according to chapter xix. 15, of power over the nations in the millennial day. He will also give him "the morning star." It is *Christ Himself*, risen and glorified, presented to the heart of the Christian, before the "day" of millennial glory shines out. At the end of the book, after presenting Himself to the Churches in the most personal manner possible—"I, Jesus," He says—He again speaks of Himself as the morning star. There he adds the word

“bright”: “I am . . . the bright and morning star.” Let the night be ever so dark, let the state of the professing Church be ever so corrupt, nothing changes the brightness of the “bright morning star.” What an encouraging promise to the overcomer; yea, to all who are truly watching for Him during His absence!

Waiting for Christ.

(Read 1 Cor. xv. 51-58; 1 Thess. iv. 13 to end.)

THESE scriptures set before us the hope of the Christian, and how the coming of the Lord affects the believer and the unbeliever. What the believer waits for is Christ, not the crown, nor the kingdom, nor the glory, though we shall have a crown, which He will put on our heads with His own hands. *We shall be* in the kingdom, we shall be sharers of His glory; but we do not *wait* for these, but for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—for the One who loves us.

Is there one who cannot speak in this way of waiting for this coming Saviour? See what 1 John iii. 5 says, “He was manifested to take away our sin,” and verse 8, “He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil!” He came to undo the effects of Satan’s work. Are you

waiting for Him? If not, you do not believe God loves you. Satan has destroyed our hearts' confidence in God. Was it not so in Eden? He said, "Hath God said?" God was never a judge till our sins made Him so—see how He walked with them in Eden, He talked with them too, but then He became a judge. But Jesus came to remove all the effects of Satan's work there, all our false thoughts of God. How that blessed One came and sat down beside us in all our sins and wickedness, and set before us all the love of God! All His love was set before our eyes. He dried up the widow's tears, &c., but what did we do? We hated Him, and at last nailed Him to the cross—He who came to undo the effects of Satan's work.

See what He says, "In this was manifested the love of God." He sent His Son, and He laid down His precious life for us (1 John iv. 9). It was His only begotten, He had not another, His only one, His beloved Son. Until that mountain, our sins, was removed, we could never be brought to God. How wonderful God's love to us! and that the Son was willing to come. He gave Himself for our sins, gave Himself for beings that were offensive to God, and then He was made sin—that nature we all bear about in us, He was made it, that your sins and doubts and misgivings might be put away, and you set in God's presence as His beloved child.

Christ has answered every question with His

blood, and God has accepted it by setting Him on His own throne and giving Him a name above every name. God is satisfied, and surely the believer may well be satisfied too. How many say, "I have a hope through grace that I shall be saved," or "My hope is that I shall die in the faith, and through the infinite mercy of God!" Is that the hope that Scripture presents? No, 'tis to be conformed to His image—that every believer will be glorified, and a body given like Him who sits upon the throne of God. Some say they would be like the angels, but God has something different for us than that. He is going to conform us to the image of His Son! His own blessed Son! No angels as they think of Christ as He walked this earth could have the feeling we have; they saw Him and wondered; they saw Him on the cross; they saw Him risen; they could not say, "He died for us." God has given us a place as sons and children. They are strangers to our feeling; *they* cannot say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." But we can, and when the gladsome moment comes He will change us into His likeness.

In the end of Thessalonians iv. we get what had not been revealed before. We shall not all die (1 Cor. xv. 51). "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after," &c.—not *all* men, but *men*. It was God's appointment when sin came in, "Dying, thou shalt die." Now He is waiting for the purchase of His love, waiting for you, for

me. Are you sure He is waiting more than you are? Yet we do long to see His blessed face. We are going to see the face that was spit upon, that patient face; and oh, we are going to see it not with all the traces of suffering, but "the same Jesus." Our eyes will rest upon that face, and read as we gaze upon it all His love to us.

He is coming for you, for me, for all those at the bottom of the sea, in all the graveyards. The dust of all is watched over by the blessed Saviour. You see the poor body being put down, down, down into the grave, but it is coming up again. What a moment when Christ shall speak that word which will call us up, and who can say when it will be—to-night? Then what will it be for us? We shall never go down into the grave at all, but in the twinkling of an eye the body that carries about weakness and feebleness will be made like Him. Those asleep will be raised, we changed, and caught up to be with Him and like Him for ever.

Waiting! watching! is it not a purifying hope as we think, "Would this do for Jesus on His return? Should I like Him to return and find me in this, doing this?" What I dread for you, for me, is, lest we should have it only in our heads, this second coming, this second advent—*know all about it*, and walk through the world with our hearts not affected by it.

There are two things said in Luke xii. 36-44. He speaks of reward, as a little bit of cheer, of

comfort by the way to those watching and those waiting. Two rewards in connection with watching and doing. The most valuable reward surely, we should all say, is in connection with *watching*. Perhaps we think what *He* would estimate most would be active work, preaching, &c., but there is something more precious to His heart than our *service*. It is watching for Him, for *Himself*. Nothing tests the soul like watching. You can get absorbed in service, and be engrossed with what you are doing. All well and good; I say nothing against service. For those watching His reward is, He'll set them down and come and serve them *Himself* with heavenly joys. A dear old saint said to me last week, "Ah, when I see a beautiful cloud in the sky I say, 'Lord, are You coming?'" Can *we* say, "I am waiting, watching?" That is the thing that delights His heart. To those *doing* He says, "I'll put you over all My goods." Which would you rather have—the glories of the kingdom, or for Him to serve you? Well, let us have both.

In Thessalonians we get the order of the coming. In Revelation xxii. we have three times, "I come quickly." My Lord *is coming*, not my Lord delayeth His coming. The evil servant does not say this right out straight with his lips, but in his heart, and goes to work in his evil ways, having fellowship with the world; he says, "He may come to-day, but I hardly think He will." This is the beginning of evil, and you will

go in for the world, and the things of the world ; but "every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (John iii. 3).

What will be the effect to the world of His coming? The Lord is coming to take us all to be with Himself, and then He will come to this earth to judge the quick and dead. That is what He rises up for, and before He comes to the earth He calls us up into the air. There we meet our beloved Saviour, and then come on with Him, and then every eye shall see Him. You will either see Him as your own blessed Saviour, or as a Christless soul. Men boast of what they have done, and of what will be done in another fifty years, and put God on one side.

What do we see and hear all around, even in the professing Church? What is openly seen on the placards? "Is Christianity played out?" How little is a clear gospel preached! No, they know it would not do, people would not come to hear it. They must have something different—amusements, entertainments, good, clever sermons, perhaps, but not man's state and God's remedy. It is the person of Christ we need, may that be more precious to our souls! 'Tis *Him* we look to see, for *Him* we wait. Do not our hearts *long* to gaze on that face? the One who hung on that cross for us? And His last word was, "*Surely* I come quickly."

What is a Christian?

I DARESAY you call yourself a Christian : whether you are right or wrong, God knows. May you be led to compare with the truth of God's Word, why you call yourself so. If you have no good ground, it may be a great blessing that you should be taught before it is too late ; and if indeed a Christian, the diligent inquiry, in the name of the Lord, will bring more blessing to your own soul.

And now, *What is a Christian?*—A sinner once an enemy, but now reconciled to God through the death of His Son (Rom. v. 10) ; delivered by the Lord Jesus from the wrath to come (1 Thess. i. 10) ; called by the grace of God to have Jesus revealed in him (Gal. i. 15, 16) ; saved by grace through faith, and that not of himself, it is the gift of God (Eph. ii. 8) ; redeemed through the blood of Jesus (Eph. i. 7) ; washed from his sins in the blood of Jesus (Rev. i. 5) ; justified by the blood of Jesus (Rom. v. 9) ; quickened together with Christ from death in sins ; raised up together, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. ii. 6) ; a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. iii. 25) ; an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ (Rom. viii. 17) ; a king to sit with Jesus on His throne (Rev. i. 6, iii. 21).

Such is a Christian; and is it not a great thing to be a Christian? Yes, it is a great thing in heaven to be a Christian; and surely it is a poor thing on earth to be anything else. Well then, Are you a Christian? Some people call it presumption in any one to say that he is; but it is not presumption—it is faith to be able to say, I know I am a child of God, because I know I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; for God tells me that if I believe I am His child.

God says in His holy Word, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." If you believe on the Son of God, it is no presumption to say that you have the witness in yourself. Again, the apostle, by the Spirit of God, says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." If, then, you believe on the Son of God, is it presumption to know that you *have* eternal life? Could it be put plainer in the Bible than it is? Man's corrupt heart is ready perhaps to believe about judgment and wrath, but altogether unwilling to believe such wondrous love as that God gave His Son to do all for us, leaving us only to confess that all is already done, because He has assured us of it. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John v. 10).

If you think that you are not a great sinner,

and that your sins will be pardoned because they are few, you are not a Christian; but if you know that you are a very great sinner, but that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake (1 John ii.). If you suppose that your sins are blotted out by any work of holiness that the Spirit of God has produced in your soul, or if you suppose that the merit of your faith has put away your sins, you are not a Christian; for faith looks at Jesus, not at itself; but if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ you are a Christian, and this is faith.

The instant you turn to God believing what Jesus has done for sinners, you enter into peace, because all that ever could be done to purge your sins has been entirely finished in the one offering of Jesus Christ. There is no more offering for sin. (See Heb. ix. 25, 26, x. 10-14.)

Your former life may have been evil till you believe in Jesus; peace becomes your happy privilege, because the blood has already blotted out your sins. So the jailor at Philippi asked, "What shall I do to be saved?" The only reply was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;" and he that very night rejoiced in God, though he trembled with fear when he asked the question (Acts xvi. 23-34). Philip met the Ethiopian ignorant of Jesus, but when the truth was brought home to his soul, he went his way rejoicing. "Whosoever

shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God" (1 John iv. 15). Peace to a troubled conscience is made by the blood of the cross, and not from walk, experience, or feelings—though surely our walk should be consistent with the claims of Christ. A believing view of the cross gives peace—a dim view little peace; but it is from resting on Christ's work that peace comes, and from nothing else. This is the way the Holy Spirit first gives peace to the conscience, and to this alone must the most experienced believer ever look back; for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus."

And oh! the graciousness of this salvation is beyond all measure!—unsought and unconditional love; the cheerful and free gift of Him who loveth a cheerful giver—the full proof of a love which nothing but unbelief can check or resist; for our sins could not. The simple fact that "God commended His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," is the proof that nothing but unbelief can hinder any sinner's participation in all the rich blessings God hath to bestow. Let not Satan persuade you that you are too great a sinner to find forgiveness, for God says that "the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). The apostle Paul said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom *I*

am chief." Take care that, in magnifying your sins, you do not lessen the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather magnify that love that forgave so much, and this will be your blessing; for to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.

And how much service are God's dear children called on to render, when thus saved? A life of service in everything they do and say. This is their happy liberty. When of the world, they considered it freedom to live for the world, but bondage to live for Christ; so now, when in Christ, it is liberty to live for Christ, but bondage to live for the world. When the apostle beseeches the brethren to live thus, it is not by the terrors of God's wrath (for from these they were already delivered), but "by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." To live as a Christian, is to have the love of Christ constraining us to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again (2 Cor. v. 15). "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). And inasmuch as we are not our own, but bought with a price, let us glorify God in our body (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20).

Fragments.

“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”
(Ps. xxii. 1).

“But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises
of Israel” (Ps. xxii. 3).

“He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto
death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. ii. 8).

“That the world may know that I love the Father;
and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I
do” (John xiv. 31).

ON the cross there were four brilliant moral
lights shining out through Christ's deepest agony,
which neither the hatred of man, nor the malice
of the devil, nor the infinite judgment of God
could extinguish—

Faith, which had God for its object when
abandoned by Him.

Holiness, which vindicated God, when the
waves of Divine wrath were His portion.

Obedience, perfect and uncomplaining, the exact
opposite of sin, when made sin.

Love unflinching, when made a curse and for-
saken.

H. H. M'C.

“THAT He may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet.
v. 6). God's due times, how blessed! He has to
wait until the surgings and upheavings of our
hearts are over before He can act for us. In the
meantime it is the waiting.

ROCHFORD HUNT.